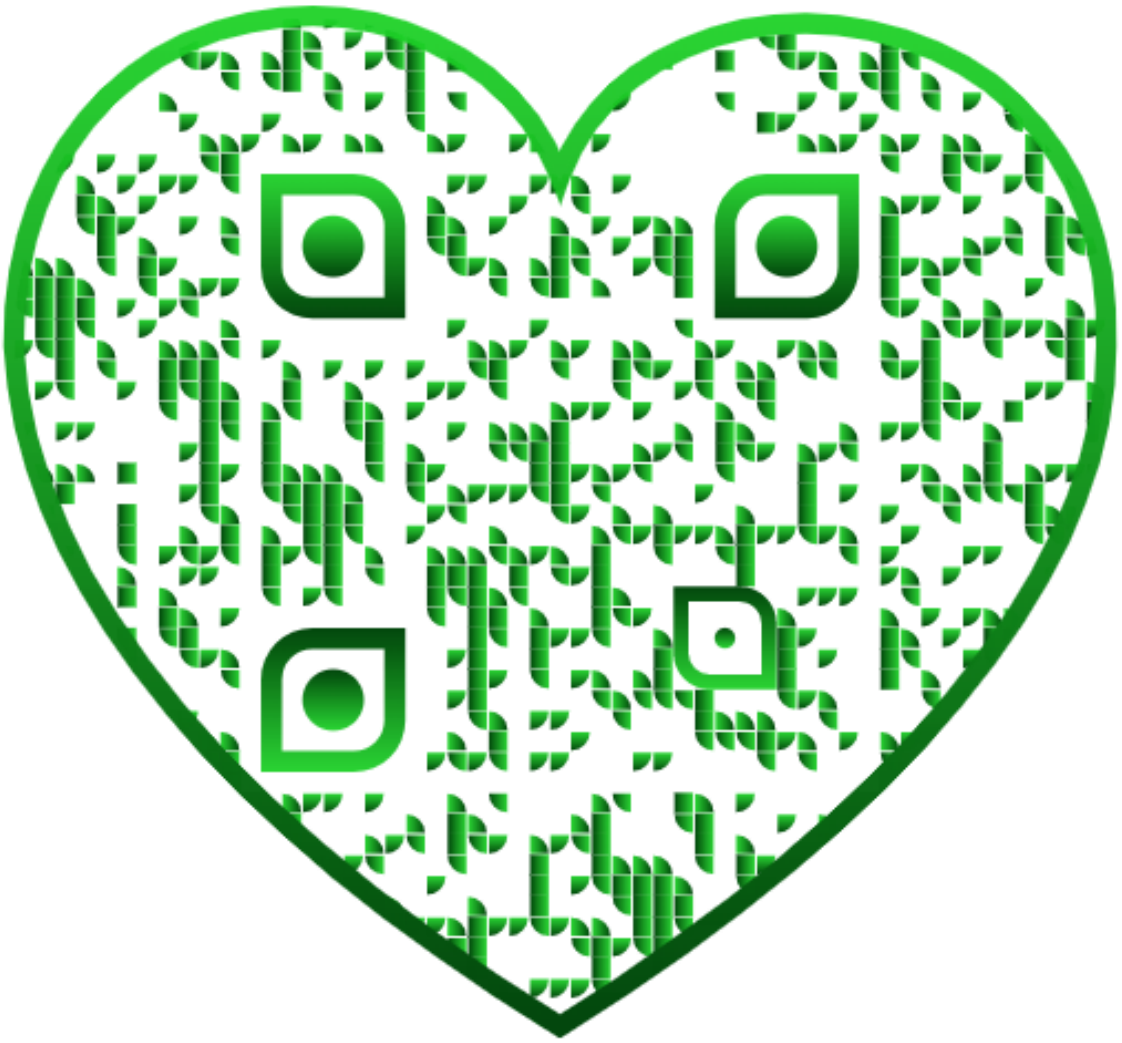
UFOs: Government Secrets Kept

The UFO Guy



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By The UFO Guy
Introduction

Now in my early fifties, I began reading about UFOs in the 1960s. The first book I read was Flying Saucers Serious Business by Frank Edwards. The book was impressive and taught me that the proof for the existence of Aliens from other worlds was substantial. The entire point of the book was for the author to present evidence to support various UFO cases as having something more than conventional explanations.

One reason I really enjoyed that book was because Frank Edwards was no slouch. He took over as a commentator and host on the Mutual Broadcasting Network replacing Edward R. Murrow, the legendary newsman and broadcaster. During an interview promoting the book he said that when he first decided to tackle the UFO subject, he decided to implement the three source rule that most reporters use to verify a story.

Edwards felt that if he could verify just one UFO incident using that rule, it would prove these objects were not just weather balloons and swamp gas. As it turned out, he found many UFO incidents that could easily be verified in that way. More importantly, he included a number of military encounters with UFOs in the book.

I got the impression that he wanted to drive home the point that, despite government statements to the contrary, members of the military and other trained observers were reporting things they saw on the land, in the sea and in the air that could not be easily identified or explained. Sadly, most of those kinds of reports were two long and complicated to make good copy for newspapers. It was easier to report that some good ole boy saw a pie plate

attached to a bottle rocket and thought that Martians were invading our planet.

When the U.S. Air Force completed their Project Blue Book investigation of the UFO phenomenon in 1969-1970, it came as no surprise to me that 95% of the sightings were listed as explainable. It was a fast way to discredit UFO reports from civilians. I grew up in an Air Force family and my father was a retired officer, so I knew what the deal was.

The Air Force didn't want to publicly discuss the subject of UFOs. Whatever was really going on was a big secret, possibly the biggest, and was going to be kept by a select few. The rest was all hearsay and conjecture. However, the Air Force hierarchy still hated being placed in a position to constantly comment on UFO reports. They hoped that Blue Book would solve that problem by allowing a time out for them to collect reports and have the evidence examined by scientific experts, but it didn't. Instead, they found themselves saddled with a government study that created more questions than answers.

The Air Force has always been a player in the UFO game, but I never believed that they were in charge of it. If any military service had some sort of governmental jurisdiction over the UFO phenomenon, it was the Navy. Despite appearances, the Navy has always been the most powerful and influential of the U.S. Military Services. The Marine Corps, the U.S. Surgeon General's Office and many other agencies fall under their jurisdiction.

The Navy was the very first branch of the U.S. Military to be organized into a paid, professional organization. Today, they have their own intelligence services, space program and the largest operating budget of any of the branches of the U.S. Military. Most of the alleged heads of secret groups and shadow governments meant to handle the UFO problem were identified as high-ranking

U.S. Navy Officers.

My own experience with the U.S. Armed Forces involved the Navy. I served in the Marine Corps during the mid-1970s and had my own set of unique experiences which I will relate later in this book. But that's jumping too far ahead. Let me back all the way up a bit by saying that I was born late in the marriage of my parents. That was both good and bad. Good, because I didn't have to deal with most of the relocation and other hassles associated with being born into a family where a career military officer is the primary bread winner. Bad, because I can only recall a brief period of time when my father was active military.

Apart from being an Air Force Officer, my father was a regular guy and great dad. He took me everywhere and provided an experiential education that was equal to what I learned in school. My mother was all for that and did the same. Both my parents believed in education and had college degrees. However, I was an only child and that made my father's experiences a tough act to follow.

After serving in the Army and on General MacArthur's Staff in the South Pacific during World War II, my father switched to the Army Air Corps and finally to the Air Force in 1947 when it was born as a separate military entity. For years after he retired, his buddies from the military stopped by for barbeques and other gatherings. It was during those times that I heard a number of stories being told about UFOs.

It seems that UFOs and Aliens were always in the news when I was growing up in the 1960s. Whenever they were, it was a catalyst for my father's friends to bring up the subject of Flying Saucers and Unidentified Flying Objects. Although my dad didn't have much use for the topic and didn't talk much about his military service with me, he was always tolerant when to came to

listening to their UFO stories.

Whenever a bunch of my father's military buddies stopped by, they hung out in our finished basement during the winter or near the barbeque in our back yard during the summer. I found a couple of places in our house where I could sit and hear everything they were saying. It was great! It was also one of the reasons I became so interested in UFOs. That interest hasn't waned one little bit during the over forty years I have been reading about, researching and investigating them.

Listening to my father and his friends talk about UFOs taught me something important. If you want to find the bone, follow the dog that buried it. If I liken the bone to UFOs and Aliens, I will have to liken the dog to our government and military. No disrespect intended. Nobody loves America more than I do and I have nothing but the greatest respect for members of our military services. As far as elected officials are concerned, not so much.

The simple fact is that the U.S. Government has lots more money and time to devote to the UFO subject than I do. If I begin by following their footsteps, I am bound to get lucky and turn up something. In fact, I have gotten lucky many times over the years by using this method and sticking to the basics of physical evidence, solid witnesses and cases involving high strangeness.

There are many personal experiences included in this book. Most directly involve the unexplained, while others do not. I felt that it would be impossible for you to understand my basic mindset, philosophy and the methodology I developed for investigating the paranormal and supernatural without the inclusion of this material. I hope you do not find it too distracting or boring. For better or worse, it's been my life.

This book is about the beginning of my interest and research into

the paranormal. It's an introduction to a most bizarre set of coincidences, circumstances and synchronicities that have made me who I am today. It would have been impossible to share any of the many fascinating cases that I have worked on without meeting some of the amazing people that have influenced me.

Radio Personalities that book me as a guest for their shows and have done so for many years call me The UFO GUY, hence the book title. I hope you enjoy my little narrative. It's the first of several books I hope to write about my experiences and investigations. As you'll soon discover, my life has been surrounded by the paranormal and unusual events from the very beginning. People that have experienced the unexplained have been drawn to me, and I to them. If nothing else, I hope you'll learn to appreciate why so many feel so strongly about their paranormal and supernatural experiences.

- The UFO Guy

Chapter One
The Firemen, The Pool, The Pilots and The Saucer Nests

The best way for you to understand the amazing things that I have experienced and investigated is for me to begin at the beginning. I was born in Queens, New York City during the mid-1950s. By that time, my parents were already living on Long Island. They bought a brand new two story house in the village of East Meadow. It was a quiet place with a few apple orchards and lots of open spaces. Before I came along, my mother lost her first child. My sister Cheryl died just after she was born.

Although she worked as an Officer Manager at that time, the loss of her child caused my mother to make a decision to become a nurse. She always felt that her child was lost because the nurses caring for her missed something and didn't listen to what she or her doctor said. To that end, she began training as a Nurse's Aide

at Meadowbrook Hospital. She worked there as an Aide for a couple of years and, eventually, graduated first in her class at the Queens College School of Nursing.

After my sister's death, my mother was told that having any more children was out of the question. As a prospective nurse, she wasn't about to let the world of medicine give up on her. After visiting a number of doctors that told her the same sad tale, my father stepped in. He had a good friend that was a doctor. They met in the military and his specialty happened to be obstetrics. I called him Uncle Stanley.

Stanley was brilliant and came along just in time for the baby boom of the 1950s. He knew that a lot of women that wanted to have children during that time, but couldn't do so for a number of medical reasons. Like my mother, Stanley hated the idea that the medical science couldn't help. He went to work designing special surgical procedures and tools to correct some of those problems and my mother was his first test case.

After becoming a partner in a private Doctor's Hospital in Fresh Meadows, New York City, he performed several operations on my mother. She became pregnant and gave birth to me at that hospital in 1956. It wasn't an easy birth and my health was in question for the first several months of my life. However, things worked out and Stanley became part of our family. He stopped by on holidays and special occasions and was always welcome. My mother never failed to remind me how miraculous it was that I was conceived and born.

I grew up on Long Island. I don't remember much about my early days there in the late 1950s because I was just too young. Fortunately (or unfortunately), my parents became infatuated with the Kodak 8mm camera and took lots of film of me as a toddler. I can't tell you how many times I was forced to sit through hours of

watching myself waddle around on our home movie screen. However, there was a side benefit.

We owned an 8mm camera and movie screen, but not the projector. My parents were brought up in the depression era, so the idea of owning something expensive like that was out of the question. Whenever they decided to show their 8mm movies to friends and relatives, they rented a projector from a nearby pharmacy for a couple of bucks a night. The rental was a three day minimum, so after they finished with it, it was my turn.

We had a finished attic. One side of it was a guest bedroom where various relatives stayed when they visited, and the other was my secret sanctum. It was an activity room where my friends and I went to play. When I got hold of the rented projector, the attic became my own private movie theater. I invited my friends over to watch old horror and sci-fi flicks.

The 8mm movies were reels that ran about three to fifteen minutes. Some were rentals or library films, while others were bought for my by my parents. They were the best scenes from old films of the 1940s and 1950s. It wasn't a VCR and there was no sound, but for us it was great! After seeing those old films on the small TV screen, it was awesome to watch them on a home movie screen (even if it was only five feet high).

Our two story house was located on Devon Street in East Meadow. It sat on the corner lot directly across from the water department facility where a gigantic water tower stood. The water department property was surrounded by a huge number of trees and gave the impression that the area was more rural than it was suburban. Meadow Lawn Elementary School was cattycorner to our lot. Today, it's called McVey Elementary.

By the time I started school in the early 1960s, the apple orchards

and open spaces that once defined East Meadow were almost all gone. A few farmers hung on to their property, but the village was quickly becoming a substantial bedroom community with lots of houses, stores, a few schools, offices and businesses. As far as mass transit went, we were a good distance from it. The nearest train station for the Long Island Railroad was in Westbury, about ten minutes away by car.

The good news was that we were in walking distance of a delicatessen, pizzeria, IGA supermarket, candy store, luncheonette, dry cleaners, bowling alley, post office, public library, barber shop, beauty salon, firehouse and more as time went on. I especially loved visiting the firehouse. I stopped by there anytime that I went to the public library next store.

My father was always very civic-minded. He cared about our town and did everything he could to support the local infrastructure, which included our volunteer fire department. He gave generously to them when they asked for donations and my mother baked more than a few cakes and cookies for their ladies auxiliary bake sales. That was about as much as my parents could do.

Dad had a second career which kept him very busy. He worked as a construction equipment company comptroller and executive after retiring from the Air Force. His job and advancing age kept him from being able to man the fire trucks, but he did everything else possible to help keep our volunteer fire department going strong. My mother worked, helped care for relatives and was involved with our church. There wasn't much time for anything else in her life either.

My interest in the firehouse began when I was very young and went with my father to drop off some donations there for some sort of charity. After my parents started allowing me to go to the library and other places within a few minutes walk of our house, I

started visiting the firehouse by myself. It was right next door to the public library and had cold soda vending machines located in the foyer.

Our library had the best selection of books and a wonderful children's area, but the heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer made it very dry. Their drinking fountains had the worst tasting water a mind could ever imagine and they just didn't believe in having any beverage vending machines available. Our library wouldn't even put a pay phone in the entrance lobby until people complained and they got tired of allowing folks to use their reference desk phone.

Whenever I headed up to the library for a school assignment or one of their special programs, I stopped at the firehouse for cold soda. The money went to support the fire department and I got my thirst quenched. Apart from the soda machines, I really enjoyed looking at all the equipment they had. There were probably half a dozen specialized vehicles and all kinds of gadgets in the garage area adjacent to the entrance foyer.

After a while, I got to know some of the guys that were regulars at the firehouse. They knew my parents and always treated me well. I started volunteering to help roll hoses, wash the trucks and clean the place up. I was rewarded for my efforts with rides home on the fire trucks when they were heading out for supplies or free soda and snacks.

I liked hanging out at the firehouse and especially enjoyed listening to all the stories they told. I sat around the kitchen or out back where they had a barbeque area and got an earful of firefighter exploits. Things always got really interesting whenever UFOs were in the news. It seemed that almost every volunteer fireman had some sort of a UFO story to tell. Many had personal experiences on and off the job or knew others that did.

I don’t recall his name, but one of the volunteer firemen worked for the Nassau County Parks Department at Salisbury (today known as Eisenhower Park). It’s located on Hempstead Turnpike, just up the road from the firehouse. Some time during 1967, he found some strange areas of affected grass on a golf course in the park. Today, we would call these crop circles. Back then, people called them saucer nests. They appeared after a number of people reported seeing strange lights in the sky near and over the park the previous night.

Seeing strange lights in the sky was and remains a common occurrence on Long Island. Because there are so many airports in the region, aircrafts in flight became an easy explanation any for unusual lights or other types of UFOs seen there. This is always a mistake. People that live in areas where planes are frequently seen in the skies get used to seeing them. They know when something different appears and doesn’t resemble conventional aircraft.

Most of the UFO sightings and encounters that took place on Long Island while I was growing up went unreported, at least the ones I heard about. The witnesses knew that no one would believe them or that people would say what they saw was nothing out of the ordinary. Even when disc-shaped objects appeared during broad daylight and floated at tree top level in Long Island neighborhoods, people found ways to justify or explain them away as we’ll see later.

It wasn’t just firemen that hung around the East Meadow Firehouse. Nassau County Police and other First Responders often stopped by. They also had fascinating stories to tell and some involved some very strange events. One police officer told us about an incident that occurred when he was off duty. He was driving out east towards Patchogue to visit his sister when it happened. The officer exited the Long Island Expressway and

started driving on local roads until he reached an area near Montauk Highway around 10 o‘clock at night.

Just before he got to a traffic light, the officer told us how a bright light surrounded his car. There was no sound and his engine suddenly shut off. His was the only vehicle near the bright light at that moment. The officer stuck his head out of the driver’s side window to discover the source of the light, but was unable to see it clearly. The light moved away after a few seconds. He watched it head southeast and said it looked like a luminous white ball. At some point it started moving very fast and disappeared from view.

His car still wouldn’t start and required a jump from another vehicle to get it going. The motorist that came along to help him arrived just a couple of minutes after the light departed and said to the officer, “What was that?” He decided not to say much and told the other guy that it was probably just a low flying plane. The other motorist didn’t ask any more questions.

After he got his car started, the officer headed straight for his sister’s house and arrived there about a half hour after the incident. His sister lived near the water on Patchogue Bay. He told her what happened and she shrugged it off as nothing unusual. She told her brother that she and many of the residents in her area often saw odd lights at night. Most figured they were lights from low flying small aircrafts or lights from the masts of boats coming and going in the bay. Again, it became easier to explain away the bizarre phenomenon then to challenge the status quo. The officer spent that night at his sister’s house.

Although he planned on doing some fishing early the next morning, the officer woke up feeling drained and sick to his stomach. He decided to sleep in. When he finally got up around nine o’clock in the morning, the officer looked in the bathroom mirror and was shocked to discover that there were red blotches all

over his face. They were itchy and irritating, but before he could schedule a doctor's appointment, they cleared up.

Patchogue saw a number of amazing UFO events over the years including an encounter involving some town workers fixing roads. Years after the officer's sighting, two men contacted me after attending a UFO seminar that I gave in the area during the 1980s. They couldn't wait to tell me what happened to them in 1965. Both men were part of a five man work crew fixing roads along Bay Avenue at that time.

While they were filling in pot holes, one of the guys turned around and saw a large disc-shaped object. It was moving slowly towards them from the bay area. As it moved over land and came closer, the worker alerted the other guys on his work crew. All of them saw the thing. The object came within ten feet of them, hovering at just above tree top level. It was so close that they were able to easily judge its size at around fifty feet in diameter.
The two witnesses that told me their story said that everyone on the work crew stood motionless watching the disc as it suddenly stopped and changed direction. The thing was now headed toward an area near Shorefront Park. Although they heard no sounds coming from the disc, they commented that all the guys on their crew later agreed that they felt a kind of weird vibration at the time of the incident.

Cars and other vehicles driving by them were oblivious to the disc's presence. The only other people that noticed it were a few children on bikes. The workmen said that the kids stopped and stared in amazement at the craft. Other bikers rode by without even bothering to look. The workmen were freaked out by the fact that so few people noticed the huge object.

That part of the story reminded me of the many accounts I heard from train riders in Brooklyn and Queens that reported seeing

discs and other objects on raised subway platforms. There could be a thousand people standing there waiting for a train, yet only a few would notice an unusual object in the sky just above them. It reminded me how personal a UFO sighting could be.

After the object vanished from their sight, one of the crewmembers said that they used their truck radio to notify a supervisor about the sighting, but nothing came of it. They were told to stop by and see him at the end of their shift. When they did, he told them to fill out a standard incident form that workers used to report accidents with town vehicles, injuries and so on. They decided not to bother.

The crewmembers were amazed that no one took the incident seriously or seemed to care much about it. It wasn't like what you see in the movies or on television when a UF is spotted and all sorts of police cars and military vehicles arrive on the scene. Even the witnesses themselves stopped talking about the incident by the next day. It was like it never happened.

Back at the firehouse, everyone was fascinated by the officer's unusual encounter. After he told the story, one of the fire rescue guys chimed in with one of his own. He said that he was called out to a house a few miles away from the firehouse. A family was swimming in their backyard pool in the late evening when a brightly lit object appeared over their backyard. Two adults and two adolescent children were in the pool at that time and all saw the object. They described it as a bright light, but couldn't see any shape. It remained over their backyard for a few minutes, then left.

Several neighbors came out to see what was causing the brightness. They also saw the light, but were equally clueless to its shape. More disturbing then seeing something like that was the fact that the family in the pool all began to feel sick after the encounter. All had red blotches on their faces and were taken to

Meadowbrook Hospital for treatment. Although he didn't know what became of the family, the entire incident was quickly forgotten.

The East Meadow Fire Department had no official policy that I knew of regarding calls involving UFOs or other strange phenomenon. Most of these type of incidents were listed as having an unknown cause or ignored apart from their conventional aspects. None of the firefighters raised a stink over how these cases were handled. Even though most of the positions in the department were voluntary and unpaid, no one wanted to be kicked out or put on suspension over something that most people didn't even believe existed.

Today, it's entirely possible that a special manual or set of instructions exists for dealing with situations involving UFOs. These might originate from any number of local, state or federal government agencies including FEMA or the U.S. Military. However, in the 1960s, it was enough for firefighters to understand that Long Island was a special place filled with government contractors. I am sure most local fire, police and other departments would cooperate with federal or military authorities and accept whatever cover story was offered in the name of national security.

With an island full of government contractors and a defense industry that accounted for so many good jobs, no one wanted to rock the boat. Diplomats and their staff serving at the United Nations in New York City had travel limits on the island to prevent spying. None were allowed out any further east then Route 110, which crossed Long Island from North to South and was the unofficial boundary between Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Most of the government contractors were located in Suffolk County. Any diplomats or diplomatic staffs that wanted to go out east past Route 110 required special permission to do so. If local or

county police saw cars or other vehicles with diplomatic plates in areas east of 110, they would routinely stop them to find out what they were doing and if they had permission to be in those areas.

I must have been around eight years old when I started visiting the firehouse. It was bizarre to hear UFO and paranormal stories from First Responders. I mean, these were well-trained and serious people that were on the ball! They weren't untrained observers or nut jobs that sat around drinking all day or having drug induced hallucinations. That's how the government and news media tended to label most UFO witnesses and these people were at the opposite end of that spectrum.

By the age of nine, I became utterly fascinated by the subject of UFOs and other areas of the paranormal. It wasn't just the firehouse stories that got me hooked. There were so many things that happened over the years that looking back on it today really freaks me out. Back then, I just assumed that everyone heard stories like I did and experienced weird events all around them.

By the time I was ten years old, I had already read several books about UFOs including Flying Saucers Serious Business by Frank Edwards and The Flying Saucers Are Real by Donald Keyhoe. I was fascinated by the various witness reports, cases involving physical evidence and pilot sightings, but not one of those could hold a candle to what would soon happen just up the street from my house.

It was 1965 and East Meadow was an unincorporated village that was a part of the Town of Hempstead. The town decided to purchase a lot owned by a local construction company and build a town pool on the property. The population of East Meadow had gone from 2,000 to 25,000 people in less than ten years and that didn't even count the adjoining villages. Uniondale, Westbury and Levittown had as many or even more people living in them than

we did. A town pool in that area was needed and welcomed. The idea was sold to the voters as a water recreation, conservation and safety issue.

Most people in middle class bedroom communities like East Meadow wanted their own backyard pool and most opted for above ground models. They were easy to put up in the summer and take down for winter. This wasted a lot of water and created safety issues after young children started sneaking into their pools and drowning. A town pool would help save water, save lives and provide a competition-sized pool for schools, clubs and organizations that sponsored those kinds of events.

Like most other things that happened in our little village, the uncomplicated pool project found itself surrounded by and knee deep in the paranormal from the beginning. As soon as the Town of Hempstead chose the huge piece of property located at the corner of East Meadow, Newbridge and Prospect Avenues for the future pool site, bizarre stories about that location and strange traditions associated with it became the talk of the town.

The property that the town ultimately purchased was owned by a guy named Hoeffner (pronounced Heffner) and most of the locals called it Hoeffner‘s Corner or Hoeffner’s Lot. Veteran’s Memorial Park, a sports complex with large pools and other facilities is located on that spot today. Back then, it was a dusty lot filled all kinds of construction equipment and supplies for Hoeffner‘s company. With new stores, a funeral home, medical offices, churches and synagogues popping up on the same street, no one was sorry to see what they considered to be an “eyesore‘ replaced with a brand new public pool and recreation complex.

Apart from all the construction stuff, Hoeffner also owned an historic house which sat off to one side of the lot. Once known as the Noon Inn, the building was a run-down, two story wooden

structure with window shutters that were always kept in the closed position. No one had lived there after 1960 and most of the neighborhood kids thought the place was haunted. Hoeffner occasionally used the old building for storage, but most of his employees hated going in there. The place gave off very negative vibes.

The Noon Inn was built around 1840 and replaced an even older structure. Instead of being demolished to make room for the pool project, the building was moved to Old Bethpage Village Restoration in 1966. There it joined other historic Long Island buildings in a re-creation of life on Long Island during the 1800‘s. The building was restored to its original glory and can be visited at Bethpage Village today.

John H. Noon operated the building as an inn from 1848 until 1859 and became it‘s best known proprietor. After buying a hotel in Plainedge, Noon moved on and several other owners kept the place going until 1913. Some time after that the Hoeffner Family bought the house and surrounding property. Surprisingly, the original name of the inn had less to do with John H. Noon and more to do with a somewhat bizarre local tradition.

Noon became a kind of witching hour in East Meadow. No one remembers why, but early settlers spread tales about strange happenings that occurred just around the noon hour. Once an area known for wool production during a time when the place was called the Eastern Meadow of the Village of Hempstead, UFOs may have had an early influence on the local’s obsession with noontime.

Unexplained animal mutilations involving sheep were reported in the area and most of these occurred during the day. In an even stranger part of Long Island known as Mount Misery, reports of unexplained sheep and cattle mutilations are recorded in church

journals dating back three hundred years. These events often occurred after strange lights or objects were seen in the sky. Coincidentally, the Noon Inn now sits not far from that area.

Other parts of Long Island have experienced similar unexplained phenomenon, including one case in Queens where a St Bernard dog was found mutilated and turned inside out after strange lights were seen in the sky over that area the night before. During the 1980s, the Flushing Meadow Park Zoo was closed after almost all of the animals housed there were found mutilated by a caretaker who came to open the place up one morning. Several employees told me that strange lights were seen hovering over the Zoo the night before. The Zoo was demolished and rebuilt from the ground out.

Midday was also a time when people turned up missing during the early days of East Meadow. However, given the need for cheap labor and ship hands in nearby cities and towns, they may have been kidnapped for those purposes. During those days the area was a crossroads where people headed out in any number of directions and lots of strangers came and went, noticed and unnoticed.

The East Meadow Volunteer Fire Department blew and tested their siren exactly at noon each day. They used the siren to call volunteers to the firehouse in case a fire was reported. The idea for using noon as the testing time was practical, but also came from a much older tradition of churches in the area ringing their bells at noontime to ward off evil. What really freaked me out was how quiet it always got after the noontime fire siren stopped sounding. It was the one time of day when you would actually hear quiet instead of any noise.

The Noon Inn was used as an inn, a small hotel, a private house, a Speakeasy and a tavern during it‘s bizarre and unusual history.

Two rumors have always existed about the place. The first told a tale that George Washington once stayed there during the Revolutionary War. That was untrue because the building wasn't old enough to be around in the days when our most famous General and first President of the United States was still alive.

The Washington story turned out to be a silly notion created by children who attended a school that once sat on the property where the East Meadow Public Library now exists. Most who attended that school agree that the legend was created to annoy teachers who were often unable to confirm or refute the story, being unsure about the actual age of the building. It wasn't until much later that historians were able to verify that the Noon Inn wasn't built until years after Washington's death. However, it should be stated that a smaller roadhouse existed there at a much earlier date.

Newbridge Avenue was a road built over an old Indian Trail that existed at a crossroads of trade routes used by early settlers, Native Americans and traveling merchants. It's likely that travelers going north to south or east to west used or crossed that trail. This made it an ideal location for a road house or inn. Always an important junction that is still very busy today, local farmers and apple growers sold their crops and goods there on weekends for years right up through the first half of the twentieth century. After the area was built up with houses and a few small businesses, local merchants felt threatened by the open marketplace and local authorities closed it down.

The second rumor about the Noon Inn concerned smugglers and bootleggers. It was suggested that the original area was a haven for smugglers avoiding British tariffs in pre-revolutionary times. Most historians believe that to be correct. That crossroads was the perfect location for a smuggler meet up point and far enough away from large towns to be ignored by the authorities in those days.

The bootlegger stories were also true.

The crossroads location of the Noon Inn made it a great place for bootleggers to use as a meeting place to sell and distribute their products. With that in mind, the old inn also became a speakeasy by default. After prohibition ended, it transitioned into a legitimate tavern. Before that, it's not hard to imagine that the place saw its share of violence and debauchery during the days when smugglers and bootleggers used it as a kind of headquarters.

Stories of murder and mayhem are as much a part of the Noon Inn as the rumors told about the place. It was said to harbor a very negative atmosphere or evil force, but that might have been the result of the location instead of the building itself. After it was moved to Bethpage Village Restoration, the negative vibes vanished and the place seemed almost cheery according to most people that have visited it (including myself).

In 1962, the Noon Inn lived up to its scary reputation when several teenagers managed to break into the old building one July night during summer vacation. While exploring the old rooms, they moved up the stairs to the second floor. The three boys, aged 13-14, apparently encountered a vagrant who was using the old inn as a place to sleep at night after he had robbed houses during the day. No one knows exactly what happened next, but the three teens ended up stabbed to death.

Their bodies were found a week later by a worker who regularly checked the old building for animals that might wonder in through small holes and get trapped inside. The vagrant was arrested in another town several weeks later and confessed to the murders when the police found some items on him that had belonged to the teens. After that, the Inn became known as the death house among area young people.

By Halloween of the same year, the old building became a dare

point to test the bravery of male teens living nearby. Several young people had been arrested trying to break into the place after the murders. A small group of older teens consisting of two boys and two girls managed to get inside on Halloween Eve, despite additional locks and precautions to keep people out. They began to explore the building while drinking beer and laughing about the reputation of the place.

Once they reached the second floor, the teens made themselves at home sitting on some old furniture while they drank. The place got very cold after a few minutes and a feeling of foreboding filled the group. Just as they were preparing to leave, one of the girls spotted what looked like a floating light near one of the walls. When they all turned to look, the light took the shape of three faces that seemed to be coming out of the wall. They were the faces of the murdered boys!

Rather then wait for anything else to happen, the group of four ran out of the building. Although it wasn't a part of their original plan, the teens all told their parents about it. The police were called and checked out the inn. All they found were some beer bottles. There were thoughts about charging the four with trespassing, but it seems the teens were so frightened by the ghostly faces that the fear they experienced was considered punishment enough.

Their ghost story spread throughout East Meadow and no further attempts were made to break in to the old building. The same night that this happened, the vagrant that murdered the boys committed suicide in his jail cell by jamming his head up between some pipes near the ceiling until he suffocated. Coincidence or supernatural justice? Suburban legend or true story? Who knows?

As the Town of Hempstead project moved forward, the negative vibes of the Noon Inn were soon forgotten and the town pool and recreation center began to take shape. Before anyone knew it, the

pool was finished and opened for use in the summer of 1966. We went there and everyone seemed to be having a great time. It turned out to be a wonderful facility, apparently so wonderful that it attracted visitors from out of this world.

My parents weren't big on extravagant vacations. Each summer they would take two weeks off and we would vacation in places like Upstate New York, Williamsburg, Virginia, Pennsylvania Dutch Country or maybe Florida, if my father got a bonus. Because the summer of 1966 was a particularly hot one, they decided that we should spend our two weeks at a dude ranch in the Adirondack Mountains. It was cool at night and reasonably pleasant during the day.

Less than a week after we left, the town pool was filled with fun seekers. Just around midday (there's that noon thing again), a huge saucer-shaped object appeared low in the sky over the pool. I don't have all the details because virtually nothing appeared in the newspaper about it and the electronic media completely ignored the event. However, several witnesses have told me enough through the years to piece together what happened.

According to people that were actually there at the time, no one really got all that upset. It wasn't like in the movie Jaws where everyone came scrambling to get out of the water. The object appeared for a very short period of time and made no sound. It went back and forth, up and down the Prospect Avenue side of the pool property and then moved away towards the south shore. Once there, witnesses said that the disc-shaped object sped upwards at a tremendous speed until it was out of sight.

The entire incident at the pool might have taken a minute, but seemed as though it lasted much longer. Photos were taken, but all them were confiscated and I'll get to that part of the story shortly. Most of the witnesses guessed that the object could have been

between seventy-five and one-hundred feet in diameter. Whatever it was, it was huge!

The bizarre thing is about what happened at the pool is that it was an absolutely classic daylight disc sighting. Most witnesses agreed that the object was both a dull and shiny silvery color, depending on what part of it you looked at. It followed modern roads that once were ancient trails, made no sound and didn't necessarily frighten people. The object eventually departed by going straight up into the sky at a tremendous speed. All these are things that disc-shaped UFOs have been known and reported to do.

Years after the pool incident, I meet a Town of Hempstead Department of Public Safety Officer at one of my public lectures at the Uniondale Public Library in the late 1980s. Members of that department were peace officers charged with guarding town property. The man I'll call Inspector Johnson was a nice guy and casual acquaintance of my dad.

Inspector Johnson wanted to speak with me after the lecture ended. I recognized him because he was a supervisor and turned up at all sorts of town events my family attended throughout the years. He was surprised that I mentioned the UFO incident at the pool. Most people had long forgotten it or never heard of it in the first place. He wasn't there when the UFO appeared, but was part of a detail of officers sent over to the pool to close it down for the day and get everyone off the property.

Because the pool was also a park and a fairly large facility, closing it down during the middle of a hot day was not an easy task. After arriving at the pool around 1:30pm, a couple of the guards that were on duty at the time of the UFO incident gave Inspector Johnson a thumbnail sketch of what happened. By 2:30pm, Johnson and the town guards had managed to get all the swimmers off the property and closed the place down.

After locking the entrance gates to the pool area and closing up the locker room, Johnson walked over to the pool and noticed that water had changed color to a weird reddish tint. The maintenance crew at the pool had already noticed this and reported it to their superiors. By four o'clock that afternoon, several maintenance trucks arrived. Johnson assumed they belonged to the Town of Hempstead, but wasn't sure.

Maintenance workers covered the fence that surrounded the pool with large cloth tarpaulins. The fence was wrought iron or metal and allowed people to see through it. The placing of the cloths secluded the pool area from public view. Meanwhile, more guards and other town officials and workers arrived on the scene. Most of the guards were stationed in the parking lot areas and a few in cars that blocked the vehicle entrances to the pool and park.

Inspector Johnson told me that he felt they were trying to avoid creating a big scene. That's probably what would have happened if local fire trucks, Nassau County Police vehicles and First Responders showed up. The idea was to keep a low profile and clean up whatever mess this was. None of the bathers complained about any ill health affects before leaving the pool area, so Johnson assumed no one was injured by the encounter.

Inspector Johnson was a curious guy and later asked some local emergency medical and rescue workers he knew to find out if they heard about anyone calling for medical assistance after the pool incident. None had as far as they knew, but people from the entire Town of Hempstead used the pool and might have gone directly to their local hospital for help. If anyone was harmed, I haven't heard about it.

Like most Long Islanders, Johnson heard his own share of UFO stories from guards at various posts and people he knew over the

years. Since he never actually saw anything in the sky that he felt couldn‘t be explained, Inspector Johnson assumed they were just seeing airplanes or something else. Up until the pool incident, he found it hard to accept that UFOs were frequent visitors to Long Island. After that, he wasn’t so sure.

By the time Johnson went off duty at around eight o’clock that evening, a lid of silence descended over the entire incident. No one was talking about it and the media wasn’t reporting it. When he returned the next day, the pool was still closed. The maintenance workers had drained all the water out of the pool and people in and out of protective suits were scrubbing down everything. That job was finally completed by around five o’clock. Inspector Johnson left shortly afterward.

Two days after the strange event, the pool was ready to reopen. It was as if nothing at all had happened. The place was cleaned up, the tarpaulins were taken down from the fences and life went on. Johnson and the other guards were given a cover story and told not to discuss what happened with anyone. The cover story became fodder for a few humorous moments in our house after we returned from our vacation just a couple of days later.

We were still unpacking the car when I noticed that men in dark suits were knocking on doors up and down the block in our neighborhood. My mother said it was probably church or sales people. My father didn’t comment. By the time we got all of our vacation stuff out of the car, we were all ready for some lemonade made from fresh lemons that we purchased at a farm stand on the way home.

While we were sitting in our kitchen enjoying the cold refreshment, someone knocked at the door. I ran to answer it thinking it was one of my friends stopping by to find out if I was back from vacation. Instead, I found myself face to face with one

of the well-dressed men I noticed earlier.

I called for my dad who came right away. Once he arrived at the door, the guy showed my father an Identification Card. It identified him as an FBI Agent. Because of my father's position in the military, it wasn't that unusual to have FBI Agents stopping by while he was still active. I remember that two came to the door to get him during the Cuban Missile Crisis even though I thought he was retired by then.

The agent said something about an incident that occurred at the town pool earlier in the week. He said that he was just stopping by to let people in the surrounding neighborhoods know that everything was alright and there was no need to worry. My father had no idea what the guy was talking about, so the agent gave him a brief summary.

It seemed that a few days before, something had gotten loose from Brookhaven National Labs. The object was some kind of experiment they were working on and the scientists involved lost control of it. That's why it ended up hovering above the new town pool. As far as stories that some were telling about discolored water go, the agent guessed that fuel from the experiment might have been accidentally dumped into the pool. He said that the water was changed out just to be on the safe side and the whole place was scrubbed down from stem to stern.

The agent concluded his summary by telling my father that the FBI wanted to reassure people that nothing serious or unexplained happened. Everything was fine now and anyone that wanted to use the pool could do so safely and without concern. He just wanted everyone on our block to know this was nothing to worry about and that it probably wouldn't happen again.

After his little monologue, the agent asked my dad if anyone in our

family actually saw the object. My father told him we hadn't. Then he asked if my father knew of anyone that might have taken photos or movie film of the object. He reminded my father that this was a sensitive situation. Anyone with photos or film footage of the object was obliged to turn them over to federal authorities.

At this point my father got very annoyed. I knew that look. He flipped out his own military identification card, showed it to the agent and told him to stop wasting his time. Then he slammed the door shut. Although he had great respect for members of the FBI, he didn't appreciate the agent telling him what his duty was. He also didn't care for the ridiculous cover story told by the agent that no one with any intelligence was going to believe or accept anyway.

My father headed back into the kitchen area and told my mother about the agent and his story. They both had a laugh at the agent's expense and when I thought about it later, I got the joke. It was like a neighbor coming to your door and apologizing for their dog getting loose and digging up your garden. It was a silly explanation for what was an incredible and still unexplained incident.
What made it even more ridiculous was that our neighborhood was filled with former and current government employees, retired members of the military, college professors and defense industry workers. They all knew darn well that the government didn't have anything technologically available to them that would explain what happened at the town pool.

On my next visit to the firehouse, I asked some of the firemen if they knew anything about what happened at the pool. That was a first for me. I listened to their stories and never asked any questions, but I felt a burning need to know more about what happened at the pool. It was the very beginning of my experiences as a paranormal investigator and researcher.

One of the guys said that they received a huge number of calls into the firehouse just after it happened. With no discernable emergency and most of their trucks out on other calls, they passed the information on to the Nassau County Police. They probably ignored the information and treated it as a nuisance call or were told not to respond after the Town of Hempstead decided to handle the whole situation themselves.

The pool incident peaked my interest in UFOs and ended up being the catalyst for some amazing conversations in our home. The weekend after we returned from vacation, several of my father's Air Force buddies stopped by for a barbeque. They were all retired and lived throughout the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Although my dad sometimes visited them, most of his friends came to our house.

These gatherings were small and meant just for the guys. The families got together once or twice a year, but that was a massive undertaking because most of his friends had two or three children each. Those events were barbeques held at reserved picnic areas in larger parks. My father preferred smaller gatherings where he and his buddies could talk freely and without too much constraint.

My mother was working the late shift that weekend at Meadowbrook Hospital, leaving my dad to entertain his friends. He was up to the task and I helped by preparing some cold plates and the stuff he needed for the barbeque. No one did barbeque better than my father. He had two barbeque grills in the backyard and both were almost always going on summer weekends. The wonderful smell drove our neighbors crazy and many stopped by to sample his wares.

My dad was a terrific all around cook. We spent an hour on Friday afternoon picking apples from a tree on the side of our house. I was amazed as I watched my father whip up three apple pies from

scratch in no time flat for the weekend barbeque. He used to laugh and say that he learned to cook out of necessity. My grandmother was a terrible cook.

As I expected, the subject of the pool incident came up during that weekend‘s get together. My father didn’t say anything about it until a neighbor stopped by. My dad and his Air Force buddies were sitting around the picnic table chewing the fat when our neighbor came over and asked him if he heard anything more about the object that appeared over the pool.

I was in the kitchen opening some bottles of beer for the guys and heard the entire exchange through the kitchen window. The conversation went something like this:
“Didn’t you get a visit from the FBI?” my father asked.
“No, I heard they came through the block, but I was at work and my wife was out shopping,” our neighbor replied.

“All I know is what Agent ____ told me,” My father continued, “He said that some experiment got loose from Brookhaven and took a piss in the pool.” Everyone laughed as my dad went on to tell our neighbor and his buddies the ridiculous cover story invented by the FBI. I was surprised that he recalled the agent’s name.

Everyone had some good laughs at the explanation. Our neighbor stayed a few minutes longer to sample some of my dad’s delicious assortment of steaks, ribs and chicken, and then he left. My dad was already tired of talking about the pool thing, but his buddies chimed in with their own possible explanations. One of them mentioned the Avro Car and wondered if what everyone saw was a next generation version of that or something similar.

The Avro Car was a disc-shaped vehicle developed for the U.S. Military. Despite its shape, the circular aircraft had a conventional

engine and was very noisy. It was little more than a huge fan that barely flew and eventually burned out its engine. Besides being a huge waste of money with little value as any type of offensive, defensive or reconnaissance craft, most military pilots that chose to say anything about the doomed project considered it a method of plausible denial to help explain away Flying Saucer sightings.

My father and his buddies agreed that the 'secret project' explanation for the object over the town pool was a No Go. Most of the work done at Brookhaven was theoretical, different, small scale or didn't involve aircrafts tested on the premises. It they came up with some sort of idea for a secret flying device, it would be developed and tested elsewhere. Why test something secret over Long Island and the New York Metropolitan Area where millions of people live when you could fly it over a desert base where the only witnesses would be a few drunken cowboys and some prairie dogs. The argument made sense then and still does today.

One of my father's friends asked, "Did anyone call Wright-Patterson and tell them that a Flying Saucer flew over the town pool and stopped to take a leak?" Everyone laughed. Wright-Patterson Air Force Base was the home to Project Blue Book, the official U.S. Government investigation into the UFO Phenomenon which ended in 1969-70. The Air Force had the duty of collecting reports during the active period of the project. A panel of experts later examined the evidence and drew their own conclusions. Blue Book never had a budget of more than $100,000 and never employed more than a dozen people at any one time. Few in the military had any use for it. When you consider the fact that the government recently spent over thirty million dollars a year to examine the effects of nocturnal bovine emissions (cow farts) on the environment, it's easy to understand why such a low budget and low priority program like Blue Book wasn't taken seriously.

The Air Force hoped that Blue Book would keep them from constantly having to comment on or explain away UFO incidents. Forms were sent to witnesses so they could report their sightings. The media was told that the information being collected would be examined at a later date by scientific, engineering and military experts. No statements would be issued until all the results were in.

When an information hungry public and media grew weary of waiting for Blue Book to report their results, the plan fell apart. The media continued to hound government and military authorities to explain the strange things that were happening in the skies over America. After years of trying to get people to take Blue Book seriously, the Air Force decided to put the project to bed and try more conventional methods of hiding or distorting the truth.

They began that process by convening the 'Ad Hoc Committee To Review Project Blue Book' in 1966, the same year as the pool incident. While the two events are probably not related, it was becoming increasingly clear to the Air Force that Blue Book printed forms, off the shelf explanations for UFO sightings and denials that anything strange was going on no longer satisfied people's curiosity. They needed fast explanations that took moved people's thoughts away from alien spacecrafts and toward simple scientific explanations (whether they made sense or not).

After the discussions that the Air Force had about Blue Book, they established a review committee of scholars to take on some of the more interesting cases in their files. A number of scientific luminaries would eventually be involved with this whole process including Carl Sagan, Edward I. Condon and J. Allen Hynek to name a few. Hynek became an alleged proponent of the cause to scientifically investigate the UFO phenomenon and take it seriously in later years, but in 1967 he angered UFO witnesses and believers after making the ridiculous claim that a March sighting was the

result of swamp gas.

Back at the barbeque, my dad and his friends enjoyed a few more laughs over the pool incident explanation and Project Blue Book. They recalled the time that New Jersey Police Officers found some kind of landing area of affected grass that they thought was related to a UFO incident. They notified the Air Force and had shifts of officers stand guard to preserve the scene until the military could send some people out there.

When the Air Force guys arrived, they pulled down a rope that the police used to cordon off the area and started walking all over the affected grass. They smoked and threw their cigarette butts down on the ground. After taking a couple of photos and collecting forms that the witnesses filled out, the Air Force guys told the police officers it was probably just a fairy ring and left.

My father and his friends probably felt sorry for the police officers, but they knew this was exactly why Blue Book had to go. Most of the guys that got Blue Book duty hated it and the entire project was giving the Air Force a black eye. However, that didn't mean that most pilots in the Air Force didn't take UFOs seriously. Just the opposite was true. No one was laughing at the encounters they were having with these objects.

As their conversation on these matters progressed, my father reminded his buddies about a story told by Chuck Yeager at a base barbeque held a Wright-Patterson a couple of years before. My parents and I attended that event and heard the story told first hand.

Known as the "fastest man alive" and "the guy with the right stuff," Yeager was the first pilot to break the sound barrier in 1947. He was flying an experimental Bell X-1 jet and achieved a speed of over 700 mph. As keynote Speaker at the barbeque, Yeager gave

an inspirational talk and then took some questions.

One of the active duty pilots asked Yeager what he thought about Flying Saucers. Chuck paused a moment, then said, “I saw one.” He went on to tell the tale of how during the testing of one of the Bell X-planes, he was flying at a terrific speed when a classic flying disc came along side of his aircraft. He guessed that it was around thirty to fifty feet in diameter, but said it could have been larger.

The object had no trouble keeping up with his aircraft and eventually moved out and directly in front of Yeager’s experimental jet. That scared the crap out of him, because the X-planes were little more than flying bullets with limited control available to the pilots. If that thing slowed down or suddenly stopped in mid-air as UFOs had been known to do, Yeager knew he would end up “like a bug on a car window.”

Fortunately for Chuck, the flying disc vanished after what seemed like a few minutes, but might have been just a matter of seconds. Yeager continued his story by describing the strange events that occurred after his flight. Normally, he was debriefed by Air Force personnel, a flight surgeon and some engineers that worked for the company that built the engine for his aircraft. They all watched the film from that day’s flight and discussed it later.

When Chuck showed up for the debriefing after his encounter with the disc, he said that there were only two people in the room. The projector and screen used to view the day’s films were not set up. As he walked over to a large table where the men were sitting, one of them introduced himself as someone with Air Force Security. Neither of the men sitting at the table told Chuck their names or presented any IDs. At that point he knew that this was not going to be a standard debriefing.

“Let’s begin by discussing what you saw during today’s flight,” one of the men said while the other sat taking notes. Yeager was annoyed by the refusal of the men to properly introduce themselves and the fact that he had never heard of civilians being involved with Air Force Security. In fact, he had never heard of Air Force Security, apart from the Air Police. The Air Police and Security Police (which they were called later) eventually became a part of the Air Force Security Forces, but they didn’t exist under that name during those days.

The man who did all the talking went on to explain to Yeager that what he saw during that flight was a new type of secret aircraft being tested by the Air Force. He asked Chuck to keep the whole thing under his hat and not to talk about it. I remember that when Yeager told the Wright-Patterson barbeque audience his response to the man in the suit, it was something like, “I said to the gentleman that if that’s true, what the hell am I doing flying this pile of outdated crap? I should be testing your new secret aircraft.”

Everyone laughed knowing that Yeager and his friends were exactly the pilots that would be testing any new types of aircraft. Chuck went on to say that he angrily left the room after his exchange with the man in the dark suit. He knew that whatever it was that he saw during that test flight, it didn’t belong to the Air Force. While he never stated that what he saw was an alien spacecraft, Yeager’s story spoke volumes about how pilots felt about their UFO sightings and how they were treated after a UFO encounter.

Military Pilots are always portrayed as national heroes and highly trained professionals, and rightly so, until they report seeing or encountering a UFO. If the incident manages to remain secret, they are told they were mistaken, that they saw a secret aircraft and shouldn’t talk about it or that it’s none of their business. If the

news media becomes aware of it and no one accepts whatever cover story the military offers, the pilots become expendable. The might be accused of being ill, delusional, drunk, temporarily insane or worse.

None of my father's buddies made any attempt to question Yeager's story. They knew the drill and what pilots faced when they reported UFO sightings. Such incidences always decayed into a game of Catch 22 with no winners. To make matters worse, the losers were almost always the pilots and the public's right to know.

Even more interesting were the stories coming out of occasional encounters and limited hostilities by proxy with the Soviet Union. One such incident involved the Cuban Missile Crisis and my father. I was only six years old during the fall of 1962, so I do not remember much about that time. I do recall that my father was supposed to be retired from the Air Force and that he was working in an executive position for a large construction equipment company. He used to bring all kinds of toy crane and bulldozer models home for me to play with.

I had just started First Grade at Meadow Lawn Elementary a few days before when I got home from school on a chilly fall day. My mother was on the phone for a long time and that was strange. My mother liked talking to people in person, but hated taking time out of her day to talk on the telephone. Looking back, I think her habit of "keeping it short" came about because my father always received so many important calls while he was still active military.

I don't recall who she was speaking with, but my mother was acting strangely mechanical. She acknowledged my arrival home, asked me to hang up my coat and go into my room to change into my play clothes. After I emerged from my room, she was still in our kitchen on the wall phone. I grabbed a soda and sat down at the table. After a couple of minutes, she finally hung up the phone

and said we would be eating dinner early that night.

My father walked in the door at least two hours earlier than expected. My mother didn't seem surprised and both of them went into their bedroom to have a quiet conversation. After a couple of minutes, they emerged and told me that dad would be going a way for a few days, or maybe a week to his "other job." I had no idea what they were talking about, but things moved very fast that night.

My mother made a fast dinner. By the time we finished, some men came to our door. They were FBI agents. I knew that because I heard my father talking to them in our living room. I was sent to my room, but my father came in a few minutes later to say goodbye to me. One agent remained in our house, while the other got in a car with my father and another man that was driving.

My father came and went for about three weeks and didn't talk about what happened during that time. The FBI guys stayed with us on and off, but mostly when my father was home. They kept an incredibly low profile, so our neighbors barely noticed. Most either worked for or knew people that worked for government contractors, so they knew not to ask any questions.

During another one of my dad's weekend barbeques, one of his buddies started up a conversation about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Our nation was in the middle of the 1968 USS Pueblo incident. All of those present were as disgusted as they could be with the government's failure to prevent the capture of a U.S. Navy electronic spy ship by the North Koreans.

After listening to the roundtable of complaints from the former military men, my father took his own turn and spoke in hushed tones. He told those present how a lack of leadership committed to democratic ideals in political and military circles would lead to the

decay of our nation and loss of personal freedoms. He bitterly complained about how he had been temporarily reactivated during the Cuban Missile Crisis just because the government didn't have enough qualified personnel available for such a huge emergency.

While talking about the missiles in Cuba, one of the former military officers present mentioned something about military aircraft chasing UFOs. He recently had his own encounter with one and wondered what everyone's thoughts on the matter were. A few of the guys chimed in with pro and con statements, and then my father told them about some bizarre incidents that occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

He said that the Air Force was going crazy tracking objects coming and going in the South Florida area. With the possibility that missiles could be hurdling our way at any time, these objects that might normally be ignored, were given high priority. Most were high altitude unknowns, but a few were discs tracked on radar and seen by military and civilian vessels.

My father was speaking in a very quiet voice, so it was especially difficult for me to hear him on that occasion. However, I believe he said that during one incident that occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a Coast Guard ship responded to the appearance of a luminous disc which was causing some kind of a disturbance near Key West. When the Coast Guard vessel approached it, the object moved slightly to avoid it. It sounded like the vessel came within fifty feet of the object, and then experienced engine failure. At that point, the disc vanished.

I assume that my father felt comfortable telling that story because he told the others that the account of the disc and the ship had made it into a few local papers in Florida. Although I have never been able to track it down, most of the newsaper space from that time was taking up by stories about the missiles and civil defense.

If a saucer story did make it into the newspaper, it's probably got lost in the shuffle and wasn't microfilmed or archived. Knowing how much my father disliked talking about UFOs, I can assume the story was true and probably included more detail than any newspaper account would include anyway.

My parents, and especially my father, probably thought I had some kind of preoccupation with the paranormal. If I did, it came directly from the environment that surrounded me. For example, I'm sure my father didn't see the conundrum I faced. I sat and listened to experienced military pilots talk about UFO encounters they had and express the opinion that these things were intelligently controlled aircraft of unknown origin, while the government said that only untrained observers that didn't know what they were talking about saw these things. Although I wasn't supposed to be listening, that didn't matter. Facts were facts and the men telling these stories were no slouches.

By the time I was in fifth grade, my life became separated into two distinct worlds: The reality of military secrets and shadowy UFO encounters, and the cover stories that were used to shield the truth from the public. I was forced to live in a world that existed comfortably with the cover stories and that made life very uncomfortable for me. To make matters worse, it seemed like fate was encircling me with an increasing number of paranormal incidents and people that were involved with them.

My mother had as little use for the unexplained as my father did for discussing UFOs. She hated it whenever I watched any television show about UFOs, ghosts or unexplained phenomenon and always said it was all a waste of my time. Obviously not a science fiction fan either, she once made me sit through a theatrical re-release showing of Bambi instead of taking me to see King Kong verses Godzilla in the theater next store. However, whenever

the conversation turned to my deceased grandfather, she reminded me of the story about one of our dogs and the night he died.

For the last few years of his life, Grandpa Bill languished from a terminal illness. When he wasn't in the hospital, he stayed with us. It was during those stays that Bill became very close to an Irish setter we had named Rusty. Rusty and Bill became inseparable. Whenever he sat in our back yard to get some sun during summer afternoons, Bill would play with her by throwing a ball for Rusty to catch or using her favorite old sock as a pull toy. Rusty slept at the foot of Bill's bed in our spare bedroom and would start barking anytime he coughed or experienced shallow breathing.

During the final days of his life, Bill was back in the hospital. It was during that time that Rusty started acting strangely. She would pace back and forth in front of the bed where Bill slept when he stayed at our home. She circled the lawn chair he used to sit in when he played with her in the backyard, sniffed all around the house like she was trying to find him and refused to play with her ball or sock toy. It was really eerie! However, stranger things were yet to come.

Although we knew he wasn't going to live much longer, it came as a bit of a shock when Bill finally passed on. We thought that he would probably live another few months based on what the doctors said, but that wasn't to be. A nurse checked on him around three in the morning and found he had died. Around the same time and without explanation, everyone in our household was awakened by Rusty. She began to howl uncontrollably. Less then an hour later, we received the sad news of Grandpa Bill's passing by phone.

I was too young to remember most of what happened, but I do recall that my parents were freaked out by the whole event. I suppose we could just toss it all off to coincidence, but the odds

do not seem to be with that considering how many other people have experienced similar events.

If it's a true saying that strange houses attract strange people, you could prove it by the weird looking house that existed on our block. What made the house look weird was that the owners chose a dark wood exterior and over-landscaped with so many trees and bushes planted that it looked more like a haunted farm, than a suburban home.

From the moment they moved in, the first family to live in that house made no attempt to fit into the neighborhood. The parents and three children were weird. They hated to answer their door, had two dogs that were as mean as they were big and never kept up their property.

Within ten years of moving into the house, the family fell apart. After several biting incidents, the dogs were taken away by the police. The older brother died of a drug overdose, the younger one stopped speaking and their sister always seemed to be taking on the role of mom and dad as their parents seemed unable to cope with anything. After their father was hospitalized for alcoholism, mom gave up, sold the house and moved away to parts unknown. Before the new owners moved in, the house was given a major facelift. Gone were the excessive number of trees and bushes which created a haunted mansion look. Gone was the unusual looking dark wood exterior which gave way to aluminum siding. The inside was gutted and replaced with lighter colors and modern appliances. By the time the new family moved in during the mid 1960s, it was like an entirely different house. However, some of the sorrow from the previous family may have been left behind.

The new family consisted of a couple, a boy and girl under ten, and a cute Yorkshire terrier they called Nappy (short for Napoleon). These people were just the opposite of the previous

occupants. They were friendly, took care of their property and got along well with all the neighbors. I knew the children and played with them whenever they came by my end of the block, but I rarely visited their house. Most of what happened next I got from my other friends and people closer to the family then I was.

A couple of my friends were regularly invited to sleepovers at the house. During the sleepovers, Nappy would normally roam the house and eventually settle into his little doggie bed in one corner of the living room. However, on more then a few occasions the friendly little dog exhibited some very unfriendly and odd behavior. Nappy would bound up the stairs to a finished attic with two bedrooms that were separated by a small hallway. Once there, he would inexplicably start to growl at the room to the right where the boy slept. This was also the room were the older brother from the previous family had once slept and where he had been found dead of a drug overdose.

Their dog's odd behavior was first noticed by the children a few weeks after the new family moved in. Some of my friends who had slept over in the boy's room told me that the boy and his parents were really freaked out by the whole thing. The girl living in that house also saw it, but she tended to ignore the incidents because thy weren't directed at her room.

Nappy got along fine with the children and showed no animosity towards the sleepover guests either. That meant that his nighttime growling behavior was being directed towards an unknown source. I suppose that any number of simple explanations could be used to explain the whole thing away, but the dog's growling wasn't consistent. He didn't do it every night and as often as not slept quietly without the growling when friends of the boy stayed overnight.

About a year after they moved in, the family moved out. This

seemed odd considering the investment they had made in the property, but I doubt the reason for their move had anything to do with their dog‘s odd behavior. There were some other strange stories from kids who spent more time at the house then I did. During a few of the sleepovers some said that the boy’s room always seemed very cold, despite a brand new oil burner having been installed in the house before the family moved in. Others said that a foul odor occasionally filled the room. All in all, not the most pleasant environment.

I can tell you that the first thing I ever learned about the unexplained is that most people do not talk about it unless you bring up the subject and I had a habit of doing just that. It wasn’t just the conversations I heard between my father and his buddies that got me into discussions about the paranormal with my friends and at school, it was a number of influences. Among them were science fiction and horror stories.

I loved the stories of H.G. Wells, Jules Verne and Edgar Allen Poe. I first came to know them through record albums that my parents purchased for me before I became a good reader. I had stories like War of the Words, The Time Machine, From The Earth To The Moon, 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea and The Tell Tale Heart on long-playing records. I took good care of those albums, listened to them all the time and played them for my friends.

Most of the kids I knew weren’t interested in the paranormal as much as I was, so when they told me about some ghost or UFO encounter that they or some family member had, it tended to be a true story. We only discussed the subject when I brought it up because of some comment someone made about one of the sci-fi or horror stories we listened to on record, a TV show we saw, a book I read and shared with them or a story I might have heard from the first responders at the Firehouse.

Hanging out at the firehouse made me aware that firefighters, police officers and other first responders occasionally experienced all kinds of extraordinary things that they couldn't always explain. These experiences fell into many categories that ranged from the unexplained to the bizarre. Some felt that they or someone they were trying to help had been saved by a miracle. A good example was the time that one of the guys was standing on the midst of a burning grocery store. The roof collapsed into the store devastating the entire structure, except for the specific area where the firefighter was standing with two store employees that were trying to get out. On another occasion, a fire in a house well known for supernatural activity lead to an even stranger experience.

Sometime around 1965 three firefighters were trying to extinguish a small fire in a vacant house that was once part of a small farm. Two police officers were standing in the back doorway of the house observing the situation. The fire suddenly erupted into a massive flame which headed directly for the back door and seemed to engulf the police officers. Despite what looked like a disastrous situation, the officers were unharmed and all escaped without injury.

Both of the officers said that they saw a strange white mist suddenly appear and surround them. The mist had been seen in the vacant home many times over the years by workmen and caretakers. It started appearing sometime in the 1950s after the owner of the home died in his bed. The family moved and sold the property off for development, but the house and a portion of the land remained undeveloped for years due to some sort of financial dispute among the new owners.

Most people that live in the area believe the mist is what remains of the former owner. He was known to be a kind person, well liked in the community. Known as a kind of local saint after he died, the

farmer is said to have prevented serious injuries during car accidents on a major road that runs caddy corner to the property and cured people that visited his property. Those that saw and were surrounded by the mist while in the house often claimed miraculous healings. The house was finally torn down in the late 1960s.

Among all the weird tales, UFOs always seemed to dominate the conversation when such topics came up. With Flying Saucers and Space Aliens constantly in the news during those days, TV news and newspaper reports about UFOs became a catalyst for the first responders to tell some of their own amazing stories. I think it also took the edge off a tough job. There were only so many sporting events you could watch on TV or ballgames you could play in the field behind the firehouse before the pressure of that kind of duty got to you.

Talking about the unexplained put things into perspective. Those conversations provided hope that other beings lived along side us in the universe and that something more existed beyond the veil of death. It allowed them to consider the possibility that deep space travel was possible, that other beings might be visiting our planet and that there was another life after death. That brought comfort to people that often dealt with the deaths of strangers or fatalities among their own ranks on a regular basis.

I loved looking at the nighttime sky. Although we lived less than an hour's drive from New York City, it was far enough away for a spectacular view of the heavens. Our backyard provided a safe and quiet spot to sit back late at night and enjoy the sky. I guess that I didn't have the skeptic's gene. If I did, all I would see when I looked at the stars was a bunch of far away places to be studied and eventually understood by science. Instead, I saw the possibility of other life forms looking back at me. The stories I read about

UFOs came to mind and it made sense to me that the universe could be teeming with life as some scientists had already declared.

Apart from the UFO stories, my interest in sky watching also developed as a result of discussions about Astronomy in school. During fourth and fifth grades, I couldn't get enough of the slides and book studies offered to us about the stars, planets and our moon. I started reading about these subjects on my own and was amazed at the diversity of environments among the planets. Most of the books at our local library omitted the possibility of life on these worlds, so I can honestly say that I got both sides of the story when it came to the scientific view of life in the universe.

Looking at the nighttime sky from my backyard made me want to see a UFO, but the idea also scared the daylights out of me. As much as I wanted to see a UFO, I didn't want to meet any Aliens at that point. However, I really did want to see a UFO, photograph one or investigate any evidence that might be left behind after a landing or encounter. After hearing all the stories that I heard about Long Island UFO encounters, I was sure that at least one of those goals would eventually become a possibility.

Knowing that many UFOs were seen just off the north and south shores of Long Island gave me an idea. I loved boating and my dad owned a small outboard engine. We went to places like Oyster Bay and Jones Beach to rent rowboats which accommodated small outboards. I liked Jones Beach the best because there were all kinds of small inlets and points that we could stop along the shore to collect sea shells or fish.

Shortly after my birthday in May of 1968, I asked my father if we could go out to Jones Beach on a Saturday. My mother was working, so that was fine with him and we made it a guy's day out. I brought David with me. He was one of my best friends. David loved to fish, but with a busy dad and three other brothers, he

rarely made it to the shore. I wanted to take pictures with the new Brownie Camera Set my parents bought me for my birthday.

After renting the boat, we put the outboard engine and gas tank in place and headed out. We cruised around for a while, and then my father found an area along the shore where we could land the small skiff. It was a nice little beach with a bridge nearby that people used as a kind of fishing pier. After enjoying some sandwiches and soda that my dad got from the deli before we left East Meadow, he and David walked up to the bridge to start fishing.

I stayed behind to photograph the shoreline and some of the ships coming and going. I was also hoping to photograph UFOs. I don't know whether my father knew about it or not, but one of the younger guys that worked at the dock told me that several UFOs had been spotted in the area of Jones Beach over the past week. He loved talking about UFOs and I made it a habit to speak with him for a few minutes whenever we rented a rowboat. I hadn't heard anything on the news or saw anything in the newspaper about the sightings, but stories like that were rarely covered unless they were major sightings involving lots of people.

I explored along the shore until I reached an open area of bulrushes and other shore growth. It was then that I noticed a flattened, circular area within all that growth. It reminded me of a photo I saw in one of my UFO books. I was certain it was a saucer nest. I visited lots of locations along the shoreline of Long Island and never saw anything like this. It really blew me away. I went through an entire role of film photographing the odd circle, then moved on down the beach and found two more! I photographed those as well until all my supplies of film were gone.

The saucer nests set off some odd feelings in me. I was all at once excited, frightened and concerned. I had seen all kinds of natural

phenomenon on nature trails and in the parks that were located all over Long Island, but this looked different and seemed very strange. I wanted to tell my father, but I knew he would probably want to leave and didn't want to spoil the day. I took my camera and walked up to the bridge to join David and my dad for some fishing.

Fishing was good for some on that day. David and my father had already pulled in some decent-sized flounders and blowfish by the time I joined them and their luck continued. I started fishing, but ended up with sea robbers, a couple of tiny flounders and an eel. My heart wasn't in it and I was sure that the fish had already helped themselves to most of my bait as I stood looking out at the water. I just kept thinking about the weird circles. While we were still fishing, I noticed that several people began gathering near where I discovered the saucer nests. Before another hour went by, even more people came and a New York State Park's Department vehicle arrived on the scene. David asked me if I knew what was happening, so I admitted seeing the odd areas of flattened growth. Before I could say anything, he ran over to have a look.

Pleasure Boaters were pulling up on shore to see what was happening, so my father said it was time to go. He was afraid that they might block off our rowboat from getting back out into the channel. My father didn't want to get stuck with extra rental fees for returning late to the dock. I helped him bring everything back to the boat and went to get my friend.

David was as hypnotized with the flattened circular areas as I was. The other people that were standing around him were equally mystified and some were really freaking out. The guys from the New York State Park's Department vehicle looked at the circles and shook their heads in amazement. I still didn't know what to think, but was glad to see that I wasn't the only one that thought

the circles were something out of the ordinary.

I wondered how long they had been there. People stopped on that beach all the time to fish off the bridge. If the circles were there longer than a day, someone would have noticed or reported them. Either way, it was time to go. We headed back to the boat dock after a very interesting day of boating, fishing and photographing. I told the guy that I always talked to about UFOs at the boat dock about the circles. It freaked him out and I could see that his next stop would be those circles as soon as he finished working for the day.

David started talking about the flattened areas in the car on the way home. Although he didn't have the interest in UFOs that I did, he spent enough time with me and heard me talk about them often enough to know what I thought they were. My father sat quietly and listened, but I could see he was slightly annoyed. I changed the subject and talked with David later about them.

After we got home, I rode my bike up to Modell's to drop off the film for developing. I stopped at David's house on the way home to talk with him some more about the strange circular areas at the beach. He came to the door and we headed out on our bikes to my house. David's father was involved in the sales and distribution of expensive shoes. The job paid well, but was exhausting. When he was home, he liked to lay back and watch sports on TV without a lot of interruptions. That was often challenging with four boys in the house.

I met David in my fifth grade gym class. We were about as different as people could be, but hit it off as friends. I think it was because everyone misunderstood and underestimated him and I didn't. He looked like the kid from the cover of Mad Magazine with a huge number of freckles and ears that stuck out like billboards from his head, talked incessantly and was dyslexic. That

made a lot of the other kids think he was some kind of an idiot, but he was actually very smart. Because he had problems reading, he enjoyed listening to books on record and that was something we had in common.

David and I spent many hours listening to the classic science fiction and other stories I had on long-playing records. After my parents got me a View Master projector and a Show 'N Tell viewer, I bought a pile of the filmstrips and recordings for them and we watched those as well. Usually kind of hyperactive and giggly around others, David seemed calm and comfortable when he came over my house and spent time with me. I was easy-going and hated kids or older people that had chips on their shoulders.

We arrived at my house and went up to the finished attic that doubled as my playroom. David started asking me about the circles again. I was surprised, because he had never shown that kind of interest in UFOs before. I pulled out some of the books I had on the subject and showed him photos of saucer nests. I told him how strange I felt about the circles and wondered how he felt?

David rarely opened up to anyone about anything personal in his life, so I was more than a bit surprised when he told me that the circles really bothered him. When I asked why, he told me that he saw a large one on the property of the water tower across Devon Street from the north side of my house. He saw it last summer when he was looking for the family cat. Cats and dogs often disappeared on to the property of the water tower when they got out or ran away.

The water tower property was covered with trees and wild growth in those days and most of it was fenced off and still undeveloped, except for the large East Meadow Water Tower and a couple of small pumping and utility buildings. Most of the kids in our neighborhood stayed out of that property for fear of fleas, ticks

and possibly rabid squirrels. Besides, the place was just big and expansive enough to get lost in if you didn't know it really well. There were no trails or walkways apart from the paved road to the water tower, pumping and small office building areas.

As I quizzed David on the circle he saw on the water tower property, I could see that he really wanted to talk about it. His motivation came from seeing the saucer nests at the beach. It became obvious to me that they had affected him more than I originally thought possible. He kept telling me how similar the nests at the beach and the one nearby were. The one difference was that the one he saw on the water tower property was much larger. He said it was just off an opening in the trees that sat across from the elementary school just up the street from my house. After talking for awhile, we decided to visit that area on Sunday afternoon.

The next day David came over just after noon and we headed out to the elementary school just a half block from my house. There was a small access road on that side of the water tower and it was easy to squeeze in under the locked gate. We did that and made our way through the trees to the open area that David recalled. Much to our surprise, there was still a large, circular area of affected grass and small growth that formed into a perfect circle.
The sight of the circle really freaked us out. It seemed as though the grass and everything within the circle had died. The grass looked more like hay and everything appeared as though it had been put through a spin art machine, all swirled in one direction. It was really crazy and we both stood staring at the thing that was now over a year old. To look at it, you would think the circle was made a few weeks ago. I wanted to take photos of it, but I was still out of film. The thing was around fifty feet in diameter or slightly larger.

Seeing the circle again caused David to enter into a mood that I had never seen him in before. He became very serious and David was never really serious. It was almost as if he was in a trance. I became concerned and suggested that we leave. We arrived back at my house and sat in the backyard for a while. David was still upset and out of it, but he did respond to me. I asked if he was alright and he said he was. I wondered if he wanted to talk about the circle and he told me that he was afraid of it.

David told me how that he was just now recalling dreams he had about the circle after seeing it for the first time last year. The dreams were weird because they were very different from what he consciously remembered about seeing the circle for the first time. According to his original story, David went into the water tower area during the day looking for the family cat. In the dream, he saw a lighted sphere in the corner of his room late at night and followed it out of his house and down the street to the water tower property.

The sphere was a small white and orange glowing object that had a hypnotic attraction. David couldn't keep his eyes off of it. The object went under the gate on the Devon Street side of the water tower property and David squeezed under the same gate to get on to the property. After following the thing into the trees, he saw a much larger object that appeared to be a classic flying saucer. The shape was discernable, but it was not lighted up and the darkness made the thing appear to be a dull gray color.

David remembered suddenly feeling like he was on a carnival ride. He felt himself moving up, down and sideways. He saw two other kids that were probably between ten and twelve years old in front of him. He didn't recognize them, but his description of one reminded me of a kid I knew that lived near the school. They floated into the object through what looked like a solid surface

with no openings. When he got close to the same surface, he was dropped to the ground.

David felt a sudden rush of air in front of his face as the small sphere appeared again and seemed to summon him away from the large object. He followed the sphere home and went back to bed. He originally recalled going there to find his cat, but the family never had a pet cat! I found this out later when I asked one of his brothers about it. I rarely spent much time in his house, so I didn't really know much about the family or any pets they might have. He recalled waking up the next day with a strong urge to go back to the water tower property.

After arriving at the water tower property the next morning, David almost instinctively moved in the direction of where the large object had been the night before. When he got to that location, he saw the huge circular area of affected grass and other growth. Unable to deal with everything that had happened to him or understand why the circle was there, he went home convinced that he had retrieved the family cat (that didn't exist) from the water tower property and forgot about everything else that had happened.

If I wasn't completely freaked out before, I was now. David's revelations left me stunned. I really didn't know how to react to them. I was certain that David didn't know enough about UFOs and possible Alien Kidnappings to put together a story like that. His inability to read through books for more than a few pages at a time made it unlikely that he had read about such things and I knew that his interest in the subject was extremely limited anyway.

His description of the two boys going into the object left me cold. I had never heard of anything exactly like that before. Even the Betty and Barney Hill UFO abduction case was very different from what David described. As the words came out of his mouth to relate the

account to me, I could see from the look on his face that he could barely accept the reality of what he was saying.

At some point during our conversations about the Water Tower circle and all that David had been through, he snapped back to his old self. It was like I had been talking to someone else for the past couple of hours. He started laughing and asked if we could go swimming in the pool that my dad had set up in our backyard. We swam while my father started barbequing some hot dogs and hamburgers. My mother arrived home from work and we all sat down to a delicious meal of barbequed meat and fresh salad courtesy of my dad's excellent cooking skills. The scene was very normal and took the edge off of an extremely weird weekend.

During the following week, I tried contacting Nicholas. I was certain that he was one of the other kids that David saw during his experience with the small sphere and large object at the water tower property. Nicolas had a unique look that made me believe it was him. He very had dark hair, lots of freckles like David and loved to dress like a soldier in fatigues. He even wore them to school with military boots and everything. He was probably the only kid in our little Long Island town that dressed like he belonged on a battle field somewhere. He even wore army style pajamas.

It was David's description of the boy in army style pajamas that made me immediately think of Nicolas. He had visited and slept over my house enough times so that I knew about his bizarre taste in clothing and sleepwear. He was twelve years old and had a brother that was around ten. When he finally decided to return my phone calls and come over to my house the following weekend, Nicolas brought his brother Paul. When I saw his brother, I was certain that I was also looking at the other kid that David saw going into the strange object in the water tower property.

Paul was short and very blond. That's exactly how David described the other boy he saw going into the object. The two lived in a house next to the elementary school that was just a short distance from my house and the water tower property, but theirs was on the other side of the school. Most of the kids in our neighborhood didn't venture into that neighborhood because very few young people lived around there. I met Nick at school and eventually invited him over to my house.

Nick's brother Paul was a nice kid, but he didn't talk much and I could see why Nick hadn't brought him along on previous visits. He only did so that time because he was stuck with babysitter duty. I didn't mind and welcomed them both over my house. Nick and I got along really well, but he didn't like talking about his home life. I had never visited inside his house, but got the impression that his parents didn't get along very well. Dad drank a lot and both parents worked.

I wasn't sure how to start a conversation about what I thought might have happened at the water tower property, so I just asked him if he and his brother ever gone on to that property. Nick got real serious and said he hadn't. He told me that his mom was very protective, forbad them from venturing on to that property and always wanted to know where he and his brother were going. She had already called my dad to be sure that her kids had arrived at our house without incident.

Despite Nick's denials, I knew that he loved to play War. Whether it was inside with toy soldiers or outside with me and other friends, he really enjoyed games like that and I could easily imagine him venturing into the water tower property which could have doubled as a forest deep in enemy territory. There were a few areas that weren't very far into that property where it would be easy to get in and out fast without dealing with the most forested

spots that could represent a health threat or water department personnel that were would occasionally find and kick kids out of there.

Having Nicholas and his brother over my house gave me a chance to get to know Paul. I was surprised at how shy Paul was compared to Nick. Nick seemed to do the talking for both of them and it was easy to see that there was more to these brothers than met the eye. After swimming in our pool, having lunch and watching some TV, we went up to my attic playroom and set up some plastic soldiers I had so we could play War. I tried to get Paul involved by having him help set up the battlefield on top of an old table that I had in that room. While he helped me, Nicholas started nosing through some of the books and comic books I had laying around.

Nick knew that I was interested in UFOs, but he wasn't as far as I could tell. After looking at some of my books, he asked me if I really believed in that stuff. I said I did and wondered if he had ever seen The Invaders, a TV show that was airing on a major network in those days. I knew that Combat! and Rat Patrol were probably more along the lines of what he watched, but thought I would ask. He said that The Invaders didn't interest him, but he kept looking at the UFO books I had.

After a couple of games of War with the plastic soldiers, I mentioned to Nick that David and I had seen a weird circle on the water tower property. He didn't really know David, but listened intently as I related the story of the saucer nests at the beach and the one we saw in the water tower property. I asked Nick if he had noticed the huge circle in the water tower property, but he just kept saying that he wasn't allowed in there. I offered to take him over to see part of the circle from an area along the road that would allow him to stay just outside of the property.

Nick, Paul and I walked up the street and stood near a side gate to the water tower property that allowed us to look in without going on to the property. We could see a section of the huge circular area of affected grass and it really started to freak the brothers out. Nicholas, who was normally very cool, calm and collected, acted nervous and wanted to leave. Paul was visibly upset and started crying. Not knowing what to do, I told them we should go back to my house.

We didn't talk about the circles anymore that day, but I was convinced that Nick and Paul had been the kids that David saw going into the object. I only saw Nick one more time after that. We drifted apart and I knew that at least part of the reason for that was what happened in the water tower property. It was obvious that he wasn't going to try and remember it, face up to it and had no interest in talking about it.

David and I talked about the incident a few more times over the next few weeks, but I didn't want to dwell on it. You have to remember that we were both still kids dealing with some really bizarre and very grown up issues. It wasn't like we could actually go to any adults we knew and explain what happened. Even many of the major UFO researchers of that day tended to shun the idea of what were generally referred to as Alien Kidnappings.

Just after the weekend that Nick and Paul came over; my saucer nest photos were ready to be picked up from Modell's Shoppers World. I had saved enough extra money from my allowance and cleaning out the neighbor's garages to buy some more film. I biked up to the store, picked up my photos, bought some more film and loaded a roll into my camera. On the way back to the house, I stopped by the side gate to the water tower property. I was intent on filming the huge circle in there, but came upon a big surprise. The part of the open field where the circle had been located was all

dug up and nothing remained of the circular area of affected grass and growth.

From what I could gather, the area was being mowed, dug up and cleaned out. There were occasional fires that broke out on the water tower property if the woods and brush in that area were not properly managed, but I thought it a bit suspicious that this particular area had been chosen over all the others in need of cleaning out. Either way, the circle was gone and I was furious that I had missed a chance to photograph it. However, the saucer nest photos that I took at the beach were not disappointing at all. They all came out clear and in vibrant color.

David came over later that day and looked at the saucer nest photos. He was really interested in those and less interested in the fact that the water tower circle was gone. From his standpoint it was probably just as well. I knew that remembering his bizarre experience with the small sphere, the large object and the circle was not something he enjoyed doing. He was obviously able to easily separate the two events and seemed to take as much interest in the saucer nest photos as I did.

David was set to go to summer camp for about a month just a few days after I got the photos back from Modells. That upset me because he was my best friend and had become the one ally I had in researching the saucer nests. He spent the night over my house just before going away for the summer and we talked about his strange experiences at the water tower one more time. I finally got up the nerve to ask him if he recalled seeing any beings or creatures during his experience.

David made an honest effort to remember, but seeing creatures or beings just had not been a part to his experience as far as he could recall. The other issue that I silently pondered was why he had not been taken into the object as Nicholas and Paul had been. Was it all

a mistake, or was he rejected due to some genetic flaw such as his dyslexia? I didn't discuss these things with him, but was certain from our talks about his experience that he definitely had not been brought inside.

The photos that I took at the beach and the circle at the water tower property haunted me for the rest of that summer. While David was away, I went through my ever-expanding book collection to look for photos and descriptions that were similar to what David and I saw in the water tower property and what I photographed at the beach. There were plenty to choose from and I was astonished at the similarities. Most were not connected to any Alien Kidnappings as far as I could tell, but I also knew that the books I read were not case reports and most offered little more than general information about each circle or saucer nest.

My in-depth study of saucer nests provided me with my first opportunity to be truly objective. While digging through books at the public library, I discovered that many things could account for the kind of phenomenon that I saw and I decided to take them all into consideration. Fairy and so-called fungus rings, grass flattened by wind, dust devils and even lightning could account for what I saw and photographed. However, these did not account for David's revelations and the apparent connection between the water tower circle and his experience.

As far as the saucer nests at the beach went, I was able to get a little more information thanks to my friend at the boat dock. When my dad and I went back out to rent a boat later that summer, the guy that I always talked to about UFOs took me aside and said that some of the people that owned small boats and tended to run them through the small inlets nearby told him about seeing strange lights and oddly "disturbed" water near the area where the nests appeared. Even stranger, the Parks Department eventually cleared

the areas where the saucer nests were located so that no trace of them was left. I was certain that all this was more than just a coincidence, but as time moved on and my new school year beckoned, my saucer nest investigations faded.

Being around retired Air Force Pilots and Officers and hearing their stories was an amazing childhood experience for me. These stories were even more amazing when they involved UFOs. It was one thing to hear an untrained observer describe a UFO sighting, but it was another to hear military pilots that had flown the most advanced aircrafts of their day talk about encountering these unknown objects in the sky. I can honestly say that I am certain not one of their stories was fabricated or embellished. If anything, they were probably understated.

My parents didn't use profanity in our home, but when my father and his friends got together and wanted to swap war stories, the language got a bit rough. They tended to move their discussions out into our backyard and talk around the picnic table or near the barbeques which were out of the neighbor's earshot and far enough away from the house so that they thought I couldn't hear. Despite their best efforts, I sat quietly in our kitchen with the window open or ajar and still managed to hear most every word thanks to our backyard acoustics.

My father was a very private person and he disliked discussing particulars about his military career with the family. Part of the reason for that was because much of it was probably classified. Before he switched to the Army Air Force during World War II and the Air Force in 1947, my father was an Army Officer. As a result of having successfully reorganized a slipshod system of handling and disbursing supplies in various parts of the Pacific, he was asked to join General Douglas MacArthur's Staff in 1943. Years later, my father talked about those days at our house

whenever his war buddies and the friends he made throughout his military career stopped by.

Although my father's friends had differing opinions about the Supreme Allied Commander in the South Pacific, General Douglas MacArthur was a name well-respected in our home. He was certain that given the limited choices, resources and supplies that the Allied Forces had available to defeat the Imperial Japanese Military; MacArthur had made the right decisions. And some of those decisions involved UFOs.

When the subject of Foo Fighters came up, I didn't know what they were and it didn't help that my father and his friends often used other terms to describe them. It was only after listening to Long John Nebel and Frank Edwards radio broadcasts and recordings that I understood them to be some sort of unidentified aircraft seen by military pilots on both sides of the conflict during World War II.

During most discussions about the Foo Fighters or related phenomenon, my father would mention something about MacArthur's Report to his buddies. I had no idea what he was talking about and finally decided to speak with him about it. I think I was close to twelve years old at the time I finally asked about the Foo Fighters and MacArthur's Report. Although my dad was less than thrilled about my eavesdropping on his conversations, he also knew that much of what he did during World War II would probably remain classified long after his death. This was his chance to share at least one wartime secret with me. I'm sure he later regretted that move.

Knowing how interested I was in UFOs, he gave me a thumbnail sketch about the Foo Fighter sightings, investigations and MacArthur's Report. He said that by the time he joined MacArthur's Staff in 1943, the General was already seriously

concerned about reports of strange lights and metallic-looking objects that shadowed or even chased Allied Aircrafts. Although he related his concerns to the Army's hierarchy in Washington, D.C., they were not particularly worried about it. It was at that point that he decided to gather more data on these encounters and, eventually, prepare a comprehensive report that would better represent what was happening.

MacArthur felt that the Foo Fighters were not Japanese or German warplanes, reconnaissance devices or secret weapons. He based that opinion on the fact that they did not attack or attempt to interact very much with aircrafts on either side of the conflict. They didn't follow aircrafts for very long or regularly appear over bases as a means to count aircraft numbers or plot courses taken by Allied warplanes. On top of that, military intelligence reports indicated that Japanese and German Pilots were experiencing the same type of phenomenon that allied pilots were. It seems that the Axis Powers were as puzzled about the Foo Fighters as the Allies. That information provided an even more important reason for MacArthur to investigate them. His concern was that these things were something new that might represent a real challenge to the U.S. Military after the war ended.

Since Allied Pilots were already routinely debriefed after their missions, it didn't take a great deal of time or effort to ask those that spotted Foo Fighters a few extra questions or to have them make drawings of what they saw. Most pilots were smart enough to mention Foo Fighter sightings during their debriefing sessions without being asked, so that kept any suspicions they might have had about the military's special interest in the phenomenon to a minimum. The information collected during those debriefings became the foundation for MacArthur's Report.

After the war ended, captured Japanese and German war records

indicated that their pilots tended to see Foo Fighters almost everywhere they flew. The records also indicated that the Germans may have been able to shoot down one or more of them and told the Japanese that the technology they found inside these unknown objects was way beyond anything humanly possible at that time. While this might have been more bragging then fact, it does coincide with documents later found in Axis war files by the CIA that indicated the Germans had captured UFOs during the war and were trying to reverse engineer them.

By the time it was finished in the late 1940s, McArthur's Report on the Foo Fighters was over 10,000 pages long. That may not sound like much in terms of government paperwork, but that was merely the information collected without any commentary or conclusions. The sightings and encounters hadn't ended by the late 1940's, but there was simply no more time or funds for further investigations as far as that particular report was concerned.

My father said that MacArthur was convinced the devices described in the report were of unknown and possibly extraterrestrial origin. Before it was even completed, the report was classified to prevent it from falling into the hands of our allies or enemies. Only the most important U.S. Military Commanders and those that represented the command hierarchy were provided with copies of the report while it was still a work in progress. They were said to be greatly concerned about the content. I seriously doubt that it was shared with any other intelligence gathering services inside or outside of the U.S. Government at that time.

Although many of the commanding officers serving in the military hierarchy in Washington, D.C. did not particularly like or admire General MacArthur and often found themselves at odds with his decisions, they knew it would be a mistake to ignore anything he passed their way. They eagerly read the report, but the majority

either dismissed or could not intellectually accept MacArthur's extraterrestrial theory about the origin of the Foo Fighters. Most, but not all, felt that way.

General Hoyt Vandenberg served as the Air Force Chief of Staff from 1948 until 1953 and died in 1954.According to my father, Vandenberg was extremely concerned about all things UFO and hated Project Blue Book with a passion. He believed that UFOs could become a serious threat to national security and despised wasting Air Force time, money and personnel on a half-hearted investigation like Blue Book.

Despite what seemed like an honest endeavor by Captain Edward J. Ruppelt to use the Blue Book team as a serious investigative effect into the UFO phenomenon during those days, he missed the point that it was never designed to accomplish that task. It was meant to placate public concern about the phenomenon and nothing more. Either way, Vandenberg had other ideas.

Although he never said it, my father gave me the impression that Vandenberg knew everything the government could have known about UFOs and Aliens in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He and other military leaders used the power given to them by the creation of the National Security Act of 1947 as a springboard to secretly exercise control over the extraterrestrial situation.

MacArthur was a warrior and a patriot, but no friend of secret government agencies or military alliances on power trips. He once said, "I am concerned for the security of our great Nation; not so much because of any threat from without, but because of the insidious forces working from within." I believe that this attitude placed him out of the loop when it came to actual decisions regarding the military and UFOs that didn't directly involve his command.

Vandenberg had been the U.S. Chief of Military Intelligence during World War II, served as Air Force Chief of Staff and Director of the CIA among other things. That made him the king of the mountain when it came to UFO information during and after World War II. His son, Major General Hoyt S. Vandenberg Jr, may have felt the same way his dad did about UFOs and Blue Book. If memory serves, he met my father at the War College when he spoke there in 1968 and later called my father in 1969 to express disgust at the Blue Book findings and how they embarrassed the Air Force.

As of this writing, the government will not acknowledge that any report by General MacArthur regarding Foo Fighters or UFOs exists or ever did exist. Because I only heard my father use the term 'Foo Fighters' a few times, it's possible that they had a different military designation. Without knowing that designation, it would be nearly impossible to track down any related documents that might lead to the discovery of the larger Report as a whole. Most wartime documents involving MacArthur are still classified anyway.

When my father and his friends discussed World War II encounters between pilots and UFOs, they called them lights, mystery lights, ghost lights, ghosts, unknowns, bogies, slippery tracers, recon echoes, kraut balls and other things I can't remember or repeat. Most of these were probably slang terms created by pilots and never made it into the official paperwork. Finding just one document from or related to that report would be almost impossible. I also have to assume that any single page or grouping of pages not physically included in the final MacArthur Report was probably destroyed.

One of the memories I have from the time that my father was temporarily active military after retirement during various national

crises was that he always carried a burn bag with him. When I visited him on base, I once saw an Air Force Staff Sergeant come to pick it up. He had to sign for the bag and verify that the contents would be destroyed shortly afterward. Thinking back on that, I can just imagine how many documents about UFOs were dealt with in that manner to keep the phenomenon secret.

The first time I publicly discussed MacArthur's Report was in the sixth grade. After talking about it with my dad and coming up with more information on the Foo Fighters, I gave a verbal presentation about UFOs for my sixth grade class and casually mentioned the report. I had spent years listening to teachers talk about how silly Flying Saucers were and how it always seemed to be untrained observers that reported seeing them. I figured it was time to inject a little reality into the classroom by discussing pilot sightings.

Although I knew my teacher would hate it and most of the class would probably think I was a freak, I went ahead with my presentation. My teacher sent me to the office after I finished speaking and got me in trouble with my father. He was summoned to the school to explain my irrational take on UFOs and mention of a classified report that no one ever heard about.

My father arrived at the school, spent a few minutes with the Principal and told me he would speak with me later. I was returned to my classroom. I doubt he said much to the Principal, but later that night we spoke and he said that I should have chosen a different subject and kept my mouth shut about the report. He didn't say it in a mean way, so I got the impression he meant that my teacher and the students didn't have enough information to believe or disbelieve anything about UFOs.

When I returned to my classroom, my teacher was still annoyed. She was the kind of person that believed anything and everything written in a science book. She spent the rest of the afternoon

explaining how unlikely it was to expect any extraterrestrial life forms that might exist to find their way to Earth. Despite her narrow-minded view, it hadn't rubbed off on most of the students. My classmates surprised me. After school and for the next day or two, more of them came up to me and started asking me about UFOs and Aliens. Most were fans of the Star Trek TV Series which was extremely popular among young people by that time. That show had already aired episodes about time travel, aliens visiting the Earth and military secrecy surrounding UFO encounters. I knew that those episodes had an effect on younger viewers including myself.

I got the distinct impression that a few of my classmates had their own UFO or Alien encounters, but none of them admitted it. However, two guys in my class had fathers that had recently been in the Air Force. One of the boys came up to me the day after my report and said that his father thought our class ought to talk more about UFOs. The other boy told me that his father had a UFO sighting. That boy invited me to his house for dinner and I accepted.

His parents were young compared to mine and I could see his dad was very interested in UFOs. Now working as an airline pilot, he couldn't bring the subject up at work. He starting asking me about them during dinner. After telling him a few UFO stories that I heard from military pilots, he shared his own experience. His wife, two sons and I listened eagerly.

From what I recall, he said that he was flying a C130 over Norton Air Force Base (California) in 1966 and saw a classic daylight disc as he was about to land. He only saw it for a few seconds, but others on the ground got a better look and the thing sent the entire Base into a spin. After he landed, anyone and everyone in authority asked him if he saw anything. He told them that he

thought he saw something, but couldn't be sure what it was. I assumed he didn't want to deal with the consequences of reporting a sighting and wisely decided to clam up.

After dinner, my parents came to pick me up and were invited in for coffee and desert. I mentioned the UFO story and my classmate's dad gladly retold it for my father's benefit. He knew that my father had been someone important in the Air Force and I guess he wanted his opinion on it. After hearing the story, my father mentioned that the Air Force was testing new technology for C-130s and other aircraft at Norton around that time. He said that the sighting might have been something that could have been explained, but either way, it could not have been openly discussed.

Before the former Air Force pilot could react, my father smiled and said it was time to go. I think the pilot got his message that it was probably something that might be considered unidentified, but not as far as the Air Force was concerned. For the purpose of that occasion, my father was reciting the Party Line of using new technology and secret aircraft testing as an excuse for explaining away a UFO sighting. Asking him anything further would merely receive the same response, even if it were worded differently.

As you can imagine, incidents like this made growing up in those days interesting to say the least. However, it was also very frustrating because I was presented with two realities: What I knew or suspected to be true and what I was told by teachers, the news media and the government to be true. I believe that's why I started reading about UFOs and investigating the paranormal in my teens. Even today, I still have some really interesting stories to tell that must wait to be told until those involved come forward or pass on.

One story I can tell you right now involves a friend of mine named Chris. Chris was a year older than me, but got left back in school. I met him in fourth grade and we became good friends. Chris had an

older brother and sister. They were much older than he was, so he couldn't really relate to them. Like my father, his was retired military and worked a civilian job. He was also an influential member of the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars). His mother was always busy with the VFW ladies auxiliary and Chris belonged to their youth organization.

Chris was the kind of kid that kept you on your toes. He was always challenging most anything you talked about, so you had better know your subject. He walked around in a VFW jacket and played sports on a number of young people's teams, so you might tend to dismiss him as a jock. His dad pushed him into sports because he was tall for his age and athletic, but Chris was smart, musically talented and enjoyed good conversation.

Looking back, I can't believe how much we talked. I think it was because we had a lot in common. With older parents and siblings that didn't live at home, Chris was practically an only child just as much as I was. He was more of a fan of science than sci-fi, but both of us enjoyed shows like The Invaders and Star Trek. We had a lot of discussions about the science and gadgets in those shows.

I tended to have a small and very diverse group of friends with eclectic interests. Kids that felt out of place or needed someone to talk to were drawn to me because I often felt out of place and in need of someone to talk with that was around my own age. However, most of my friends were so different from one another that if you put them together into one group, they would probably not have gotten along very well. As a result, I tended to hang out with them one at a time.

I probably spent more time with Chris than any of my other friends. His father could be rough on him and on several occasions he came over with bruises on his face. He said that he got hurt playing sports, but I got to know him well enough to read between

the lines. In those days you could go to school bleeding from the ears and no one cared. It's not like today where if you're a kid and go to school with even a tiny cut on your cheek, the teachers are ready to call family services.

My parents were sensitive to his situation and allowed him to sleep over our house whenever I asked. My dad knew that a lot of guys came back from war or military service with all kinds of personal issues or a big chip on their shoulders. Sometimes that translated into instances of spouse or child abuse. I was glad that my family never had to experience anything like that.

It never failed to amaze me how that many people with paranormal experiences were drawn to me. Many of my friends had experienced something unexplained and Chris was no exception. I knew him for a couple of years before I discovered that he believed in ghosts and felt haunted by them. He revealed that fact one night during a sleepover after we watched a scary movie on TV.

Chris told me that he saw a ghost in his house on several occasions and had some strange occurrences in his room as well. I only visited his home twice and didn't stay long, but I did get to see his room. It was a large bedroom on the second floor of a two floor house. It seemed cheery enough and his entire house didn't look like the kind of environment that would make someone's imagination run wild. I was too young to consider the fact that a fear of his dad might have caused him to invent some sort of imaginary phenomenon as a means of escaping from an unpleasant reality. However, looking back on what he told me tends to make me think that wasn't the case.

He was a well-grounded kid who wasn't given to tall tales. His life was busy enough and he had accomplished enough so that he didn't need to make up stories. With a room full of sports trophies

from all the children's leagues he belonged to, various awards from the VFW youth organization and a real talent for guitar playing, Chris didn't need to embellish his achievements. And as far as our friendship went, it was such that we didn't feel a need to compete or better one another with made up stories and he wasn't the type of guy to scare easy.

Chris told me that he had been seeing strange things in his house for the past several years. These events occurred at night and during the day. It started a few years before I met him when he saw his deceased grandmother walking through the kitchen of his house during a summer afternoon. The odd thing was that his grandmother had died when he was still an infant. He never got to know her and there were just a few photos of her in a family album that showed what she looked like.

The only reason that Chris knew it was his Grandmother was because he went to the basement where his mom was doing wash and told her about seeing the elderly woman in the kitchen. After describing a very short woman with bright red hair, his mother searched the house. When it was obvious that no one was there, she flipped open a family album and showed Chris a photo of her mother (his Grandmother). He said it was her and his mother began crying.

Although his dad was a matter-of-fact realist with no interest in the paranormal, his mom believed in the unexplained. I wouldn't say she was interested in it, but just accepted the fact that strange things sometimes happen. Both his parents were of Scottish descent and his mom felt that part of her heritage was a belief in ghosts and spirits. She never admitted to seeing anything herself, but Chris told me that she was a private person who wouldn't have talked about her experiences even if she had any.

The grandmother reappeared to Chris several times, but never

communicated with him as far as he recalled. While she occasionally strolled through various parts of the house, he never saw her inside his room. Instead, he told me that shadows filled his room every once in a while and seemed to beckon him away from his bed. Chris got up on those occasions and followed the shadows to the window where he saw lights crisscrossing his backyard, which was fairly large.

I took in all that Chris told me and found myself at a loss to explain or even understand most of it. He revealed these things to me during the summer after David and I saw the saucer nests and the large circle in the water tower property. Chris and I had just graduated sixth grade and were set to start Junior High School. David was away at summer camp again, so I spent a lot of time with Chris. Chris and David knew each other, but didn't get along.

Ignoring the grandmother stories for the time being, I asked Chris if he happened to have noticed any odd circles or affected areas of grass in his backyard. He hadn't. Despite the absence of physical evidence, I was almost certain that his experiences had more to do with UFOs than anything else. That theory was confirmed after Chris told me that he woke up several times outside of his house in the middle of the night. On one occasion he found himself fully dressed and near our school, on another he was standing a block away from his house in his pajamas.

Chris didn't drink alcoholic beverages or use any drugs at that time as far as I knew, so that would not account for these unusual events. Although I didn't know a lot about Alien Kidnappings, I was learning fast and likened the experiences that Chris had to what had happened to others that I read about or people like David that I knew. There were times when I thought it was all just some kind of misunderstanding, but I couldn't explain the experiences that my friends were having as merely made up stories,

coincidental nightmares or the results of an over-active imagination.

Nothing I saw on The Invaders or Star Trek came close to what David or Chris were experiencing. All this was new to me, but I had a logical mind and that mind was telling me that this was a phenomenon that could not be ignored or easily dismissed. I even considered the possibility that Chris might have some sort of psychological problem, but I knew him well enough to say that he didn't exhibit any signs of mental illness.

By the end of that summer our twosome became a threesome. Paul (not Nick's brother) was my age and had no brothers or sisters. He knew Chris and me from our fourth grade class and occasionally came over to my house. Paul had some health issues and had been in and out of the hospital for the past several years, so he hadn't been able to make or keep many friends. By this time, he was doing better and able to venture out more.

Paul lived across from Modells which was about a twenty minute walk or short bike ride from my house. He started coming over when Chris and I were hanging out. Like Johnny, Wayne, Karen, Allan and a few other kids I knew, Paul was not someone that had paranormal experiences as far as I knew. Although he was very different from Chris, we all got along and his presence provided a sense of normalcy in our lives. One thing we did have in common was golf. Our fathers all played golf at least once every couple of weeks and got us into it as well. Chris was really good at it, I was mediocre and Paul just sucked at that game.

None of us were really crazy about golf, but it was good exercise and provided us with an excuse to visit nearby Eisenhower Park. There were a couple of golf courses there and we used to play nine holes, then go and hang out in the park until our parents came by and said it was time to go. There was a small lake, lots of

recreation areas and a cafeteria in the golf clubhouse where we could get something to eat. We went bike riding, played softball, volleyball or just hung out. Our parents didn't want us hanging around the park by ourselves, but it was very safe with lots of park personnel everywhere during most of the daylight hours.

There were lots of stories about UFOs seen over Eisenhower Park in those days and more recently, but I never expected the place to fit into the experiences that Chris was having. That happened when we biked past the Veteran's Memorial building. It is a tall, but narrow building that juts up a couple of stories into the sky like a needle near the lake in the park. Paul and I biked right past it because we had seen the building a thousand times before, but Chris stopped to look.

I could see from the expression on his face that Chris was in another place mentally. When Paul and I biked back to him to ask what was wrong, he said he was fine and we continued on to the parking area where we were going to meet Paul's mom and get a ride home. We went over Paul's house for a while, but his mom was so over-protective of him that she drove us crazy. None of us used drugs, smoked or drank, but she always wanted to know what we were up to and just assumed that Chris and I were going to get Paul in trouble. Little did she know that she probably had the straightest and most well-behaved kids in the neighborhood over her house?

After Chris and I got tired of watching Paul's mom follow us around for most of the afternoon, we left to go to my house. By the time we got back to my house, it was almost dinner time and it started to rain. Chris was invited for dinner, so we hung out in my attic playroom and watched TV until it was ready. My parents bought a portable black and white TV for that room. Chris seemed distracted, but I didn't say anything. He eventually commented on

our park visit by saying that looking at the Veteran's Memorial building caused him to recall being in the park at night. He remembered seeing a bright light shining in his face, then darkness. After that he was standing near the memorial fully dressed at night.

From what he could recall, someone or something was trying to pull him in the opposite direction away from the memorial. He couldn't remember seeing anyone, but felt himself being pulled. Then he was back at home in his bed, still fully dressed. I wondered if it could have been a dream, but Chris said that it didn't happen very long ago and that he recalled having wet grass on his sneakers when he woke up in bed. The really odd thing was what happened next.

While relating the incident to me, Chris remembered that he also saw something move past the doorway to his room. After going out in the hallway to have a look, he saw that it was his deceased grandmother again. But this time she morphed into a light, then a shadow and finally vanished before his eyes. Chris said he was too tired to care about what was happening and went to sleep. He was certain that he woke up the next day without remembering any of those experiences.

I was fascinated by what Chris said, but didn't know where to go from there. I didn't want the paranormal to dominate every moment of my life and wanted to enjoy my friends apart from their unexplained experiences. I suggested that Chris think about the whole thing and that we talk about something else. He was fine with that and the subject didn't come up again for some time. I already had enough pressure with having to start junior high in just a short while and face all the changes happening around me.

I began junior high in 1968 along with David, Chris and Paul. We all went to McCleary Junior High School, which was about two

miles from my house. We saw each other throughout the school day. David and I were in the same Chorus class, Chris and I shared a physical education class and I saw Paul during my lunch period everyday. By that time I was certain that David hadn't had any more strange experiences, but I couldn't say the same thing about Chris.

Chris started stopping by my house more frequently. We were close friends, but it was obvious that something was happening in his life that made him want to avoid being at home. It wasn't the abuse that his dad heaped on the family, because his father was ill and bedridden by that time with his pension and mom supporting the family. There was something else going on. It took me a while to get to the bottom of it, but I eventually figured out that the paranormal experiences Chris was having were increasing and becoming more terrifying.

On several occasions Chris told me that he believed the shadows he saw in his room had begun to hurt him. It took some encouragement, but I finally got him to tell me the rest of the story. He said that they were picking him up and dragging him into a large light that always seemed to be just outside his bedroom window. Once inside that light, they undressed and scratched him. He showed me small scratch marks on his legs and back.

I didn't have much to offer in the way of information about what was happening to him, but he seemed alright with that. I think he just wanted someone to talk to who would understand what was going on and keep his secret. I did dig though the various UFO books I had and found some articles about Alien Kidnappings, but these had limited value as far as his case was concerned. Nevertheless, I photocopied those pages, gave them to Chris and suggested that he read them.

The experiences that Chris was having were really taking a toll on

him. High grades that had always been a part of his learning experience were slipping down to mediocre levels. He refused to dress out for Phys Ed most of the time claiming that he was sick. I knew that it was because he didn't want the other students to see the marks on his body. He was eventually kicked out of that class and placed in a study hall.
The reality of paranormal phenomenon really hit me hard that year in several ways. It was one thing to hear people talk about a UFO sighting, but another to watch someone like Chris have to deal with the consequences of his experiences every day of his life. The worst part was that I couldn't say anything about it to anyone and that was starting to cause problems for me.

Chris stayed over my house for the weekend sometime that November during my first year of Junior High. Nothing ever happened to him at my place as far as I knew, but I could see that he had developed a habit of waking up at night to check and see if everything was alright. He was supposed to walk to school with me on Monday, but woke up early that morning and was very upset. We were sleeping on a pull out couch bed in the attic and I heard him turn on the television.

After explaining that he couldn't sleep, we talked for a while. Chris had a couple of teachers that were really riding him and he owed both of them assignments. I knew these teachers and they were real jerks. One was a gal that hated all males and the other was a guy that was fresh out of college and thought himself to be God's Gift to the teaching profession.

Chris said he didn't want to go to school that day and spent a couple of hours convincing me to skip and go to the park instead. I said I would do it if he would go to the Principal the next day and get those teachers off his back. He agreed and we set off that morning to the park instead of school. It was chilly, so we headed

to the golf clubhouse and bought a warm, inexpensive breakfast.

I never did this kind of thing before so it made me very nervous. I hated skipping school and saw no reason to do it. Our school was strict about those kinds of things and I knew we would get in trouble. By lunchtime we had walked through whole the park and were really cold. We met some other kids that were skipping school near the heated rest rooms by the lake and I knew that would cause us trouble. I finally suggested that we go to the public library. It was nearby and a warm, safe place to be.

The library was always crowded that time of year and we could easily go unnoticed among the various student groups that visited from schools with limited book collections and resources. While at the library, I helped Chris catch up on his assignments. Just after school dismissal time, we headed our separate ways and I went home. By the time I got home I was angry at myself for being talked into the whole thing and angry that I could not possibly explain what was happening to Chris without violating our friendship. Even if I did tell someone, no one would believe me.

The next day at school was predictable. One of the kids we saw skipping school in the park ratted us out and told the Principal after he got reported to the school by a park worker. The kid knew Chris and me from elementary school. I was summoned to the office just after second period and informed that I was in trouble. My mother got called to the school and the Principal made a big deal of the whole thing.

When I was finally allowed to say something, I explained that I was helping out a friend. I knew they wouldn't really listen to or care about what I had to say, but I pointed out that this wasn't something I normally did and that neither of us would have had to do it if teachers in that school were a bit more understanding. I explained that Chris had a difficult home life and, without going

into details, said that they should ask him about it.

The reality of my school experience had been that students were expected to be in school and learn no matter what was happening at home or in their lives. They could be homeless and starving, but as long as they were in school every day and got decent grades that was all that mattered. I listened to the Principal's self righteous speech for a few minutes and then got released back to my classes. I got one day of detention after school and served it later that week.

My mother gave me a hard time when I got home, but I was adamant that sometimes friendship had to be put before everything else. She knew I wasn't someone that made a habit of cutting classes, so she understood my point about friendships whether she agreed with it or not. My father was less upset about the whole thing and respected my desire to help out a friend.

Chris told the principal about some of the problems he was having with teachers and at home. They spoke with his mom and she agreed to get him some counseling (I would have liked to have heard those sessions). I didn't see Chris for a while after that and found out that he had been transferred to another school for kids with problems. He called me a few times weeks later, but it didn't sound like things got any better for him.

Paul started to get interested in UFOs after years of looking through some of the books and magazines I had laying around. We talked a lot more about them and I helped him write a report on the subject for his world history class. Apart from those kinds of conversations with friends, I tried keeping a low profile when it came to the paranormal and had no intention of writing any reports about it myself.

That Christmas vacation was a wonderful time for me. It snowed

like crazy and put everyone in the holiday mood. David and Paul hung out with me, went bowling and played with an HO scale train set I began to set up and work on in my basement. Chris called and stopped over my house a few times, but he did not look good and I could see that the experiences he was having and everything else in his life were taking a toll on him. He started drinking and was high when I saw him at the store just after New Years Day, so I thought it best to limit my contact with him. I felt that I had done all I could.

When school started up again in January, Paul told me that he got a terrific grade on his report about UFOs. He listed me as one of his sources and his teacher wanted to speak with me. His teacher was also my American History instructor and seemed surprised that I knew so much abut UFOs. Although this was exactly the kind of thing I was hoping to avoid, I had a nice conversation with Mr. W. and explained a few of the reasons for my interest in the phenomenon.

Paul had already told Mr. W. about the now infamous Foo Fighter report that caused such a stir after I presented it in elementary school. The teacher wondered if I would consider writing another report like it for an upcoming world history writing competition, but there was no way I wanted to go down that road again. I explained that some of the information I used in the report came from my father and that I had used it without really discussing it with him. I suggested that he ask Paul to write something about UFOs for the competition, but for better or worse, I could see that Mr. W. knew that I was really the knowledgeable one when it came to the subject.

Seeing that Mr. W. was intent on having me write something, I suggested that perhaps the physical evidence associated with UFO sightings would be a better topic than Foo Fighters. He listened

intently as I told him all about the saucer nests at the beach and really perked up when I said that I still had the photos. He asked me to bring the photos into school and show them to him. I agreed and he said we would talk again the next day.

I brought in the saucer nest photos and showed them to Mr. W. After we talked about them some more, he suggested that I write an essay about the unusual circles for the competition. I reluctantly agreed. The competition was statewide and wouldn't affect my grades. There wasn't a lot of motivation for me to write anything, especially since I wanted to keep a low profile when it came to this subject.

I had enough problems trying to fit into a student body in a school where more than half of the kids that attended there smoked, drank or did drugs. Hardly a week went by without at least one of the students ending up dead or in the hospital. None of those things held any appeal for me and that placed me on the outs with most of the other kids in my classes. On top of that, I didn't need to be labeled as some kind of nut just because I happened to believe that UFOs where something more than figments of overactive imaginations.

One of the drawbacks of having older parents was that they had virtually no idea what it was like to attend school in a day when drugs were everywhere and values were changing on an almost daily basis. I knew for a fact that several of my teachers smoked pot and that made it even harder to be someone that didn't believe in smoking, drinking alcohol or using drugs. If I had a vice, it was my interest in the paranormal and I wanted to keep that as private as I could.

Mr. W. sent home some paperwork for my parents to fill out related to the essay competition. My mom was thrilled, but my father was understandably suspicious. He knew how interested I

was in UFOs and wondered what the topic of my essay would be. I told him that I was going to write about the saucer nests that I saw at the beach. He seemed fine with that and I knew by now how important it was to treat certain things I heard my father and his military friends talk about as confidential.

I wrote the essay about the saucer nests in a very half hearted manner. I stuck to the facts, quoted statistics and the opinions of others. In short, I made it as boring as I could. My writing skills were already very limited at that time (and haven‘t improved much since), so making the essay suck was easy. Despite my best efforts, Mr. W. seemed very happy with the final result when I turned it into him and entered it in the essay competition.

My essay tanked just as I had hoped, but not entirely. I ended up as fourth runner up and that meant it would eventually be published in some kind of scholastic publication that was distributed to Junior and Senior High Schools. Fortunately, that didn’t happen until I started eighth grade. By then, I had found enough non-addicted kids to hang with so that fitting in was less of an issue. The bad news was that Mr. W. sent copies of prints he had made of my saucer nest photos for the publication to use with my essay.

When I received a copy of the scholastic publication, I was not a happy camper. The first two pages were about a 1968 movie called Charly. It was a major Hollywood film about a mentally-challenged man that receives a controversial operation that turns him into a genius, but later reverts back to his original condition despite his own best efforts to fix the problem. My essay and saucer nest photos took up the third and fourth pages. That brought a huge amount of attention to me and was the last thing I wanted to have happen.

Mr. W. made things worse by posting copies of the pages from the publication that contained my essay and photos on bulletin boards

around the school and in my history classroom. He was my teacher for eight grade social studies and became an increasing thorn in my side. It was obvious to me by now that he had an interest in UFOs. He kept asking me to give a presentation about the essay during an upcoming school assembly. I refused, but agreed to give a short talk to our class about the saucer nests.

My twenty minute presentation to the class went well as far as Mr. W. was concerned, but had exactly the outcome that I feared. The harassment and cheap shots began immediately after class and continued during lunch. It wasn't the fact that I spoke about UFOs that really caused the problem; it was just vicious kids with nothing better to do but pick on their classmates. Their lives were miserable, so they wanted to be sure that everyone else suffered along with them.

I hated violence and rarely fought, but after being harassed for a couple of hours, I slammed a couple of the guys that kept bothering me into the lockers. They were too stunned to fight back and saw that I was really angry. When a teacher that saw it tried sending me to the office, I went to see Mr. W. instead and demanded that he handle the situation he had helped create. He told me to go to the office and said he would deal with it later.

I had enough of it all and walked out of the school. I ran to a movie theater across the street and called my mom to tell her what happened. Knowing she wouldn't really get it, I called my dad and he came to get me from work. After I got into his car and I explained what happened, he took me back to the school. We went to the school office armed with a list of the guys that had been harassing me. My father spoke privately with the Principal for about twenty minutes, than emerged from his office with a pass for me to return to class. He told me if there were any more problems that I should call him. Later that day I saw all the guys that had

been harassing me and Mr. W. sitting outside the principal's office as I walked by. I felt a wonderful sense of justifiable satisfaction. The next day Mr. W. apologized to me for what happened. I accepted the apology and left it at that. It was times like that when I was really glad my father was who he was. I would have preferred to handle the situation myself, but I knew that no matter what I said or did, the entire thing would end up being my fault as far as the teachers and school administration was concerned.

Chapter Two
Florida, Farragut, Friends and Frights

At the end of eighth grade, our family moved south to Florida. My father's age was catching up with him and the cold winters on Long Island were no longer something that he was willing to deal with. After a doctor told him that moving to a warmer climate would be the smart thing to do, he talked it over with my mother. She was also tired of the cold winters and work involved in caring for a two story house and a large corner lot.

Although I was a bit apprehensive about the move, I was also ready for a change. With an economic downturn and localized recession going on, many of my friends were moving away because their parents needed to find employment. Although I knew that I would be leaving everything familiar to me, I felt as if I was in a rut and welcomed the opportunity to expand my horizons.

My parents and I decided that the west coast of Florida was the place to go and they choose the city of St Petersburg as our new home. After vacationing on the east coast several times in the 1960s, my folks wanted something that was a little less of a rat race. Mom found an excellent job at a doctor's hospital in the St Petersburg area. A friend of my dad helped us locate a terrific little three bedroom house just two houses away from his and my parents bought it.

My father saw Florida as a new opportunity. Although he was retired, he wasn't the kind of guy that liked inactivity or was satisfied with a few rounds of golf to fill his day. He quickly found an up and coming resort on St Petersburg Beach that needed someone to whip it into shape. After one meeting with the management, he was hired and couldn't wait to get started.

Although the outside heat took some getting used to, our house had air conditioning and was just the right size. It was smaller than

our pervious home and a lot less work to care for. That gave me more time for myself and the St Petersburg area offered lots of things to do that attracted my attention. With bus routes that went everywhere and a stop just a block from our house, it was easy to get around. I biked to some places, but it was kind of hot for that and the buses were air conditioned.

My parents enrolled me in junior high and we arrived just in time for me to attend the fall classes. The school was completely different from what I was used to. The hallways were all open air and some of the teachers had such deep southern accents that I couldn't understand them. Being from New York, I 'm sure they found my own accent just as annoying. The good news was that the students were friendly and many really went out of their way to make me feel welcome.

My ninth grade classes in the new school were easy, too easy. I was learning things that I had already learned two years before. When she first enrolled me in Junior High, my mom visited the new and modern administration office building. After I voiced concerns about the school, she stopped by to speak with a few of my teachers and take a better look at the place.

Disgusted with the condition of the school classrooms and poor curriculum, she decided to pull me out of that school and enroll me in Admiral Farragut Academy for the remainder of the school year. Farragut is a well-known college preparatory military school with a Navy theme. Two of the twelve men that walked on the moon attended that school, along with lots of other famous, successful and influential people.

There were two Admiral Farragut Academies. One in New Jersey which opened in 1933 and the other which opened in 1945 in what used to be the famous Jungle Country Club Hotel near the Jungle Prada area of St. Petersburg, Florida. I attended the one in St Pete

which was still an all-male day student and boarding school in those days. Although I looked forward to going there, it didn't take long for me to figure out that I didn't belong once I started classes.

Most of the students that lived on campus were boarded by rich parents that could have cared less about them. Even the day students were mainly latch key kids with dads that worked and were focused on their careers and moms that spent a lot of time fulfilling social obligations. Few had little time for their children. Always somewhat sensitive to people and environments around me, I felt very uncomfortable there. The sadness of the present combined with the ghosts of the past to cause me a fair amount of overall mental misery.

The main building that now housed the library, boarding students, kitchen, main dining room and some offices was once a large hotel that served a very eclectic clientele. These included the rich, famous, show people and gangsters like Al Capone. Capone owned a night club in the nearby Jungle Prada shopping area. I enjoyed visiting the library, but most of the areas in the old hotel building made me feel very strange. I preferred other areas of the campus.

There were some new classroom buildings, gardens and sitting areas that I really enjoyed hanging around. These were quiet places where I could sit, study, read or just take time for thought and contemplation without feeling uncomfortable. It was in one of those sitting areas that I met a guy I will call Brodie. He was a rich kid, but you would never know it. Unlike most of the guys at the school, he was friendly and didn't walk around with a chip on his shoulder. A day student, he had all kinds of hobbies and some interests similar to my own.

Noticing that I was reading a book about UFOs, Brodie came over to where I was sitting and we began a conversation about the

phenomenon. I was surprised at how much he knew about the subject and we became fast friends. Although I could tell that he had issues in his life, Brodie was an upbeat guy that had as much trouble fitting in at Farragut as I did. He was smart and had a thirst for knowledge, but looked a bit weird with light brown curly hair that seemed impossible to keep combed and an incessant smile that annoyed his teachers, the other students and officers at the school.

Brodie didn't come from a background that included many people that served in the military. As far as he could recall, most of his family made the weapons of war, but rarely fired any. They were all very rich and that created another problem for him. I soon learned that many of the boarding students disliked Brodie and were jealous. Most of them were from wealthy families, but not as wealthy as Brodie's.

He came from an extremely influential family with lots of political clout, lived on a yacht at a nearby marina and attended Farragut as a day student. Brodie enjoyed his wealth and didn't hold it in disdain like most of the other rich kids at the school did. Although there were as many personal issues in his life as there were in the lives of the others, he just didn't let those things get him down.

Brody's parents lived in New York State and rarely visited him. His primary guardian was the head housekeeper that worked on the ship. He doubled as a companion, but didn't live on board and went home at night. Brodie spent most evenings and weekends alone on the yacht except for a security guard that occupied a small building nearby. The rest of the staff came and went as needed.

After Brodie and I got to know each other, it didn't take long for him to invite me on board his yacht. It was a fabulous ship that had a lot more room inside than I believed possible. Brodie's room was filled with hobbies, collections and lots of books. He had quite a few about UFOs. After realizing that I knew a lot more about the

paranormal than he did, Brodie organized a weekend shopping trip to a large bookstore in downtown St Pete. He wanted me to help him build a collection of books about the unexplained.

With a car and driver available, Brodie picked me up at my house and we headed off to the bookstore on a warm Saturday afternoon. We spent what seemed like hours going through new books, and then hit other stores to go through used ones as well. Brodie insisted on buying me as many books as he purchased for himself and that really built up my collection of books about the unexplained.

After our shopping spree, we dropped my books off at my house and then headed back to his yacht. I offered to help him organize his book collection and he was thrilled with that. I stayed over night and we talked a lot about UFOs and ghosts while getting his collection in order. I could see that Brodie was not someone that had any unexplained experiences as far as I could tell and that was a bit of a relief. It was nice to be able to have a conversation with someone about the paranormal without worrying about how it would affect them or being concerned about the experiences they had.

The next friend I made as a result of attending Farragut was a girl I will call Merrell. She was the daughter of someone very important in the administration of the school. For that reason and others, most of the guys there and many of the students at the nearby girl's prep school she attended were afraid of her. She was blond, a bit tall for her age and wary of people she didn't know. I think that gave her peers a false and possibly negative impression of her.

I met Merrill at dance class. In order to fulfill my extracurricular obligations at Farragut, I was expected to take part in at least one after school activity. I chose dance class because it was easy. The class met twice a week and was conducted by a ladies auxiliary

member. She played modern tunes and taught us all basic steps. The class mixed guys from Farragut with girls from a nearby prep school. Most of them were terrible snobs, but they made good dancing partners.

No one wanted to dance with me because I was a nobody Day Student and nobody wanted to dance with Merrill because they were afraid of her dad and her. We became partners by default and actually enjoyed each other's company. The class allowed time for partners to converse and get to know each other. Merrill didn't like talking about herself, but wanted to know all about me. We were both in ninth grade and found that we had a lot of things in common. One of those things was an interest in the unexplained.

Merrill told me that while visiting some relatives in Philadelphia a few years back, she heard strange sounds in the townhouse where they lived. There were three children in that dwelling and one was her age. The kids told her that the place they lived was old and once owned by a man that was hanged for murder in colonial days. Unable to verbally communicate with the living, the story goes that the man still occasionally walks through the house proclaiming his innocence by walking the floors at night and even during the day.

While staying in the townhouse, Merrill felt like she was being watched by unseen eyes and heard someone walking up and down the stairs and through the hallways when no one could be seen. Surprisingly, she wasn't as scared as she was fascinated by the experience and that really impressed me. I could relate to how she felt and shared some of my own weird stories with her.

After a few classes and conversations about the unknown, Merrill opened up and shared more about her life with me. Merrill hated living at Farragut and did not enjoy attending the girl's prep school. She was a very down-to-earth person from a family of

hard working people. None of them were wealthy and they all felt like fish out of water dealing with students that came from very rich backgrounds. She worked a part-time job several days a week just to be able to afford the clothes, shoes and accessories she needed for various events and functions at the prep school.
I think that Merrill and I linked up because we both came from similar backgrounds, interests and felt equally uncomfortable among all the rich kids. I admired her ability to stand up for herself and she always did that. I met her dad after being invited over for dinner. The first thing she did was insist that we all stand on polite informality. That saved me from an evening of being nervous around her father who was, after all, an important part of the administration of the military school I was attending.

Merrill loved reading about the unexplained. Before long, I introduced her to Brodie and we became a threesome of good friends. Merrill and I got into the habit of biking to Brodie's yacht after school a couple of days a week. We all got to know each other better and I was surprised to find out that Brodie's parents wanted him to live at the school. He refused and that was the reason for the yacht and support staff. Although it all seemed extravagant to me, I could certainly understand why Brodie didn't want to board at Farragut. He didn't fit in as it was and their military lifestyle didn't suit his own "do as you please" kind of personality.

Merrill, Brodie and I started going to movies together, attending concerts, some sporting events and a few paranormal lectures. That brought us even closer together. Merrill had girlfriends, but most of them were more like school pals and I could see that she didn't confide in them the way she did in us. I was too new to the area to know anyone else and it seemed that we were the only ones that Brodie knew or trusted around there. Everything was going

fairly well and that should have been a sign to me of impending doom.

I was still fairly unfamiliar with St Pete and knew even less about the area where the academy was located. Everyone called it the Jungle Prada, so I started doing some research on it in the Farragut Library. There were a lot of weird stories going around about the old hotel, the Prada and the neighborhood near the academy in general. The more I read about the place, the more I wanted to get to the bottom of it all. It came as no surprise when my research showed that the area had a very unsavory and odd reputation: A reputation which included the paranormal activity.

The Tocobaga native people built burial mounds and villages nearby as early as 900 AD and thrived right up until the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors in 1528. They came looking for gold and other precious things that might bring them great wealth. When they didn't find them, the Spanish allegedly enslaved, killed and infected the Tocobaga with diseases that were not native to the new world. Within less than two hundred years, the Tocobaga were extinct. However, remnants of their mounds remain and so do their ghosts. One story that I heard from a college student and library assistant at Farragut that I'll call James was particularly frightening.

When I began asking around the Farragut library for any information about the area, the Tocobaga people and any possible strange stories or legends that might be associated with any or all of those topics, James pulled me aside and told me his story. He knew a woman that lived in one of the newer neighborhoods nearby. The woman was a retired teacher that had been his instructor in college. After she retired the previous summer and moved to the area from the east coast of Florida, she asked James to help her organize her books and papers and agreed to pay him

for a month‘s work during the summer break.

The retired teacher planned on writing a book and taking a part-time teaching position at the nearby girl’s prep school when the fall semester started to make her retirement a bit more comfortable. In search of a good topic for what she hoped would be an historical novel, the teacher visited the Tocobaga burial mounds and other archeological sites of interest in the area.

After looking more deeply into the story of the Tocobaga people and their experiences with the Conquistadors, their sad tale really tugged at her heart strings. The teacher was certain that she had the perfect topic for her book, so she began visiting local historical societies and major libraries to put together enough information for her novel. Fluent in several languages including Spanish, the teacher was amazed by what microfilm records of books and journals about Spanish conquest of the new world revealed about the local native tribes and their lifestyle before and after the arrival of the Europeans.

She revisited the historical sites related to the Tocobaga several times and actually collected some dirt from one of the mounds to bring home. She knew it was wrong and probably little more than build up dirt mixed with sand from recent years, but wanted something that was a part of the Tocobaga that she could focus on while she wrote her book. After reading through the various notes she made and photocopies of articles, book portions, journals and references to the tribe, the teacher began forming some ideas which she hoped would translate into a wonderful story. It was during this time that strange things began happening.

James came over one day and noticed a foul smell in her kitchen. The teacher said that she had noticed the odor, but thought it was just an over-filled garbage bag she had forgotten to change out of the small trash receptacle she kept in the kitchen area. Instead, they

discovered that most of the food in her refrigerator had suddenly gone bad. This despite the fact that the door was closed, the temperature was set properly and the appliance seemed to be working fine.

After replacing the bad food, the same thing randomly happened several more times. She finally gave up and replaced the refrigerator with a new one, but food still occasionally went bad. James checked the house temperature thinking that it might have too warm and caused the refrigerator to malfunction, but the teacher's house was centrally air-conditioned and kept cool most of the time.

While she worked on her book, the teacher asked James to help her for two additional weeks and agreed to pay him extra to do so. She was having trouble focusing on her work and started feeling ill. After several episodes of throwing up, the teacher visited a local doctor. She was fine and the fact that James wasn't ill probably meant that whatever was going on wasn't related to anything environmental in the house. The air conditioning was working fine and the teacher stayed in most of the time working on her book. Whatever was happening wasn't related to over-exposure to the summer heat and humidity. After a few days she started feeling better and everything was on track with her project, but then a new series of unexplained events began in the teacher's home. Items from her desk started falling to the floor when no one was in an extra bedroom she used for her office area. These items included the small bottle which contained the dirt from the Tocobaga mound. Unexplained tapping noises on the glass in her windows occurred during the day and at night. Strange odors continued to fill the air even when all the windows in her home were wide open.

Just a few days before James was set to complete his work with

the teacher, he arrived in the late morning to find still in her sleepwear, watching television, sweating profusely and huddled under a cover on the living room couch. She was obviously very upset, but hesitant to explain why. She finally agreed to tell James what happened after he threatened to call the police or emergency medical services if she didn't. He feared that she had been the victim of some sort of crime.

The teacher explained that she was working late the previous night when she started seeing what looked like things moving around the hallway through the corner of her eye. When she got up to look around, no one was there and her front and back doors were locked. Thinking it was just a hallucination or figment of her imagination caused by fatigue, she ignored it until she felt something brush up against her back. When she turned around, she saw someone looking at her.

What appeared to be a male figure dressed in some sort of Native American garb from long ago stared into her eyes, than vanished a few seconds later. The teacher was freaked out, but also sure it wasn't real. She was tired and had been working on her book project for many hours. She later told James that she had no history of seeing things that weren't there, but also admitted that she was deep in thought about her book when the man appeared.

The teacher decided to brush off what she was experiencing as fatigue and went to bed. She fell asleep almost immediately, but woke up after hearing tapping noises several hours later. It was then that the same figure she saw previously walked into her room from the hallway, stood near her bed, stared at her for a few seconds and then walked in the other direction towards a window in her room. She told James that he just strolled through the wall next to her bedroom window like it wasn't there. She grabbed a cover, ran into the living room, turned on her television and

remained there until James arrived later that morning.

Still upset and in some sort of shock, the teacher said that the man she saw looked very real, but that she couldn't recall a lot of details about his appearance. He had an olive skin tone, wore hand made clothing that appeared typical of the kind Native Americans might wear and had very dark hair. His eyes were hypnotic and she was unable to avoid looking at them. Skeptical by nature, the teacher was still questioning the reality of his existence and the actuality of her experience as she told her tale to James. Despite the unexplained event which frightened the daylights out of her, the teacher told James that she remained adamant about her book project. She was stressed out and tired, but wasn't going to allow hallucinations to stop her from writing what she felt would end up being a wonderful historical novel. James was concerned about her, but went about the clerical work that the teacher assigned to him while she regained her composure and returned to working on her book.

Later that day the teacher began suffering violent headaches and feeling nauseous. James took her to the emergency room. Within an hour, she was feeling fine and returned home. Another a few more hours went by and the teacher became ill again, James took her back to the emergency room. Once again she started feeling better and the doctors could find no immediate cause for her illness. Despite her apparent recovery, they decided to keep her in the hospital overnight for observation while they waited for the results of several tests that had been administered.

James apprehensively returned to the teacher's house to search for a small personal notebook where she kept important phone numbers. He found the numbers of her two sisters and some close friends. He called them all that evening and explained what was going on. Most lived some distance away, but one of her sisters

arrived the next day to help. James picked her up from the airport in Tampa and drove her to the hospital. On the way there, he told her all about what was happening. She seemed surprised and said that nothing like this had ever happened to her sister before.

The teacher and her sister had a pleasant visit, and then it was time for her to leave the hospital and return to her home. They went back to the house with James. When they arrived, the threesome found things in disarray. Items had again fallen from her desk to the floor in the extra bedroom she used as an office. A knick knack shelf had fallen off the wall in her bedroom and several items had been knocked off her dresser and on to the floor. The foul smell of rotten food again filled the kitchen as food in her new refrigerator again went bad.

As the three considered the inexplicable events that were occurring in her home, the teacher again fell ill just two hours after returning to her house. The other two felt fine, but took the teacher back to the hospital. With a long wait for the teacher to be reexamined, James and her sister decided to return to the house to see if they could locate the possible source of her illness. Both of them searched the property for anything that might account for the mystery illness, but found nothing. Even her garage was clean and free of any paint cans, turpentine or other solvents that might cause headaches and nausea if they were improperly stored.

With no apparent illness that could account for the teacher's symptoms or possible hallucinations, it was hard to understand why James had not fallen ill or seen anything strange apart from the items which kept falling to the floor. He had spent a significant amount of time at the house and should have been affected it anything in the teacher's home had been causing her health and other problems, but that wasn't the case. With no solution to the teacher's health issues at hand, her sister felt that she should sell

her recently acquired home, take the loss and move, but James had another idea. Although he didn't believe that anything paranormal was going on, he did believe that the teacher had become obsessed with her book project. He convinced her sister to rent a small storage locker nearby and remove everything that had anything to do with the historical novel from the house. She agreed and James took all of the teacher's notes, photos, photocopies, drawings and the soil from the mounds and placed them in the storage locker.

Unable to find an explanation for her mystery illness, the doctors released the teacher from the hospital. By this time several of the teacher's close friends and her other sister arrived in town. They visited her at the house and were relieved to find her feeling better. James filled them in on what was happening and told the teacher that he and her sister had made decision to place all the materials from her book project into storage. She reluctantly accepted their decision and agreed that she might have allowed the work on her historical novel to emotionally overcome her.

During the week after the teacher returned home from the hospital and while she was spending time with her friends and family, James may have had his own bizarre experience with the Tocobaga people. He began to feel like someone was following or watching him. He lived in a small apartment several miles away from the teacher's house. He started waking up in the middle of the night feeling like he was in some sort of danger. This happened several nights in a row and it was completely out of character for him to experience anything like it. James always slept soundly through the night.

Just after he placed the teacher's book project materials into storage, James also had a series of unusual incidences of bad luck. He got in a minor car accident, lost his wallet, broke a window in his apartment while trying to open it, sprained his angle after

tripping over some stuff left in his apartment hallway and misplaced some cash he was saving for a utility bill. James was skeptical, but he was no fool. He told the teacher about his experiences and said that he needed to take her book project materials out of storage and return them to her.

Still reeling from all she had been through, the teacher told James to take the materials out of storage and dispose of them with one exception. She asked that he return the soil she had originally collected from the Tocobaga site to the burial mounds area. He did everything she requested and, whether coincidental or not, that turned the tide of his bad luck. The teacher was also feeling better and no additional episodes of paranormal or other activity occurred once the items related to her book project had been removed from the house. The food in her refrigerator no longer went bad without cause and items stopped dropping to the floor from her desk and dresser.

At the time he told me the story, James said that it had been about a year since the strange events at the teacher's house. She took the part-time teaching job at the girl's prep school and began looking for other topics for her book project, but after all that happened she was hesitant to try and write again. James stayed in touch with the teacher, occasionally doing some clerical work for her. She avoided the areas near the mounds and stopped talking about the Tocobaga altogether.

I could see that James was still hesitant to label the events at the teacher's house as paranormal, but he was definitely fascinated by it all. We discussed the situation over several weeks in the sitting area just outside the Farragut library during his breaks. I took notes and shared some of my own weird stories with him, but I knew that James hoped to eventually write an article or report on it, so I never wrote about the teacher's story before now. I tried to

interview her several years after I heard the story, but she didn't want to talk about it anymore and I don't think James ever bothered putting the entire account into writing.

It's not uncommon for some visitors to the historic Tocobaga burial mounds to report a sickening feeling in their stomach after going there, so the teacher's physical experiences were not uncommon. Most native Floridians chalk that up to tourists and new arrivals from cold states spending too much time outdoors in the Florida heat and humidity, but others have a stranger explanation. A few psychics and spiritualists insist that the illness comes from the Tocobaga ghosts or their residual psychic energy. It's a reminder of the stomach pains they felt while suffering from diseases and illnesses brought to their shores by the Conquistadors.

By the time the Europeans arrived, the Tocobaga people had already developed a highly organized society which included chiefs, headmen, warriors and ordinary people. They lived along at least fifteen miles of coastline and their towns or chiefdoms extended about twenty miles inland. Most of their buildings and temples were made of wood and covered with palm leaves, so little remains today to tell the tale of their existence except for the burial mounds and written accounts of their lifestyle as witnessed by the Spanish.

The Spanish Conquistadors were not the only ones that came to the Jungle Prada searching for riches. In 1924, a man named Walter Fuller built a shopping and entertainment center at what is now 1700 Park Street North. The complex was designed to serve guests who stayed at his nearby Jungle Country Club Hotel. Parts of the shopping and entertainment area have survived to this day including a night club that was partially owned and run by Al Capone, the famous Chicago Gangster.

Capone's Gangplank Club existed in Fuller's shopping and entertainment complex and featured live performances by some of the top names in entertainment from that time including Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Lots of celebrities, notables and wealthy people dropped in when they visited the area or while they stayed at Fuller's hotel. Baseball great Babe Ruth was married there.

Anything but dry, the place had a regular supply of bootleg booze brought in through a secret tunnel that ran from the shoreline to the club courtesy of Capone. This wasn't bathtub booze, but high quality liquor brought in from Canada and other places. Part of the tunnel doubled as a storage space in case the club was ever raided, but former employees say that gambling and prostitution also took place there.

Big Al may have had a bigger piece of the action then just the club. Some believe that he helped bankroll the entire shopping and entertainment complex as a silent partner and received monies from everything that was sold or served there. Always one to keep a sharp eye on his investments, Al Capone built a house nearby at Venetian Blvd. N.E. and Bayou Grande N.E. on the shore of Grand Bayou. Trusted associates stayed there, ran the club and watched over the entire shopping and entertainment center operation to be sure the Boss got his cut of the profits.

Capone's house has a million weird stories associated with it. Some say it doubled as a special high class brothel for privileged people that visited Capone's club and wanted more than just booze. These were special customers that weren't ready to settle for the cheap hookers that offered their services in the club's secret tunnel. They wanted satin sheets, showgirls and high-priced prostitutes that allegedly offered all sorts of depraved and unusual sex acts, along with a buffet of drugs.

Not everyone that entered Big Al's house found the good time they

were looking for and, according to former employees of the club, many never saw daylight again. These were guys that got into too much gambling debt with Capone and refused to pay, local gangsters that tried to short him on liquor deliveries or customers that simply angered him by causing too much physical damage to the high-priced goodtime girls he kept around for his special club patrons. Either way, it's believed they were killed in or near the house by Big Al's associates. Their bodies were probably dumped elsewhere.

Possibly the weirdest tale surrounding Capone's house involves some of his business associates falling into bad company that might have actually been worse than their own. Unsubstantiated stories tell of people that secretly arranged and took part in occult ceremonies near the remnants of expensive homes that once graced the shoreline in that area. Some of the fences that surrounded these residences and a few ruins could still be seen in the early 1970s. Huge trees covered with Spanish moss hid these residences from public view even in their heyday and preserved the privacy that those which could afford it desperately craved.

Legend has it that a few of the wealthy people that lived along the shoreline were involved in devil worship, practiced a kind of black mass or other dark arts. Their choices may have been influenced by paranormal events that occurred in the area that had nothing to do with dark forces. These included regular sightings of ghost lights on the shoreline, strange glowing objects seen in the sky over the waterways near the Jungle Prada and reports of the ghostly activity. More than a few people claimed they saw the apparitions of the Tocobaga people, Conquistadors and even pirates that died in the area over the centuries.

Some rumors say that a few Capone associates got involved with the locals that practiced devil worship and that some of these

sessions might have actually taken place at Capone's house. There is no way to know if this is true or if they actually occurred at all. If they did, it's unlikely that Capone had any involvement with them since he was rarely there and showed no interest in such things. Given the number of people that came and went from his house, it would not have been a good place to hold any sort of secret ceremonies. If they did occur, the ceremonies probably took place in the secret tunnel of the club when no one else was around.

No matter what happened at Capone's house, it eventually became a kind of local curiosity and still attracted a lot of attention long after it was sold by its most famous owner. Even after changing hands many times, the house continued to have an unsavory reputation that caused local law enforcement authorities more than a few headaches. Most of the subsequent owners never actually lived in the house, preferring to rent it out or use it as some sort of investment property. No one stayed there very long and several tenants complained that the place was haunted.

Local government officials took possession of the house after a long-standing tax bill remained unpaid. By that time it was in poor condition and several previous owners were still making claims on the title to the land it stood on. Unable to resell it due to all the legal complications, local officials became unwitting caretakers of a very troubled property. Local police were constantly being called out to respond to reports of break-ins, odd noises, ghost sightings, drug parties and even unauthorized séances held on or near the property.

Fed up with all the nuisance calls, the local authorities tried building fences around the property and placing trained dogs there to keep out the curious. They installed lights to illuminate the house at night hoping that would end the attempted break-ins. After people continued to try to trespass on to the property and

reports of strange activity going on in the house when no one was there kept coming in, off-duty police were hired to guard the place. The reasons for all these efforts were not unselfish.

Talk of restoring the shopping center and Capone's club to its original grandeur was the catalyst for protecting the old house. Politicians that were always trying to attract more tourists to the area felt that the house might also be restored and attract visitors with fat wallets. After the restoration plans fell through because of legal and financial issues, the local authorities and politicians gave up. They ordered the house condemned as a public nuisance property and had it torn down.

The current house that exists on the property once owned by Al Capone has no association with the gangster's residence. It was built after Capone's house was demolished and the current owner hasn't reported any unexplained or paranormal activity as far as I know, but the ghost lights, apparitions and other unexplained phenomenon continue to be reported in the Jungle Prada area.

Whether it was the stock market crash, the end of prohibition, Big Al's arrest and conviction on tax code violations or bad luck brought on by the curse of the Tocobaga people, Capone's Gangplank Club and the other retail establishments in the shopping and entertainment center eventually fell on hard economic times. The closing of a nearby airport once used by Capone and the Country Club Hotel guests was the final nail in the coffin of Fuller's dream. The shopping and entertainment center closed and the hotel went into decline. The Jungle Prada was probably just too far off the beaten path to remain profitable during the depression and was forgotten about afterward.

Except for a housing boom in the 1950s and 1960s which ate up a large portion of the undeveloped land in that area, the place hasn't had much in the way of good fortune or a legacy to brag about.

The takeover of the Country Club Hotel property by Admiral Farragut Academy was the one exception to that rule. The arrival of the Academy helped the place retain a certain amount of grandeur and prestige. It also brought some economic relief to an area in much in need of it.

The fact that the Jungle Prada remained an out of the way place for so long was not entirely bad news, especially from an environmental and historical standpoint. During a time when a building boom in and around St Petersburg was placing condominiums, apartments, houses and retirement centers on every piece of ground that was available, the Prada managed to escape that fate and retain some of its original beauty and the charm of a bygone era.

The area around the old shopping and entertainment center was semi-secluded, easily accessible and appealing to anyone looking for a spot to unwind. A long pier jutted out into the water behind the building where Al Capone's club once existed and I loved going there. It was a quiet place where you could sit, fish or just watch boats go by. Merrill, Brodie and I often biked to the pier to talk and take in the sun after school. It was there that I shared what I learned about the history of the Prada and some of the strange stories I heard about the place with my friends. They couldn't get enough.

It was fascinating to think of all the things that occurred at Capone's club so many years ago while sitting on the pier talking about these things just a few feet from where it all happened! The building that once hosted the gangster's club now housed a restaurant. Merrill, Brodie and I ate early dinners there on several occasions and imagined the place being filled with gangsters, celebrities and notables while famous bandleaders played hot jazz music. It was a real mind freak.

The restaurant manager was a colorful character that loved to tell stories about the glory days of Capone's Gangplank Club and he definitely added to the atmosphere of the place. I remember him being a polite guy with a foreign accent that always wore a finely-tailored suit and did all he could to promote the restaurant. For example, he placed an expensive piano in the eatery and paid a pianist to come and play jazz tunes and dinner music on busy nights of the week. He would stand up and share the history of the place and various stories about it during the pianist's breaks.

I never met the owner of the restaurant, but the manager said that he lived out of town and I guessed that the two were probably related. Just before we started hanging around the place, the manager had supervised a complete remodeling of the restaurant. That included the installation of some very unique items into the decor. The local newspaper which reported on the redecoration and reopening of the restaurant said that some of the interior furnishings at that time where once a part of the set from the film, Casablanca. It was shown on TV enough in those days to see the resemblance.

The manager told everyone that the owner purchased the old set pieces during an auction sale at the MGM warehouse. The items were made available after a TV series based on the original film tanked. They had all been refurbished for the recently canceled series and were in excellent condition. The pieces included tables, chairs, part of a bar, some valances, wall decorations and other things from the famous 1942 movie starring Humphrey Bogart and other legendary film actors. Those sets gave the restaurant a distinctively 1930s-1940s look that seemed to fit in well with its reputation. Whether they were actually from the Casablanca set, I don't know.

As Spring Break approached, Merrill and Brodie had an idea.

Inspired by all the stories I told them about the Prada, they wanted to stay overnight in the restaurant to find out if it was haunted. They were certain that somewhere between the notorious reputation of Capone's club and the original set pieces from Casablanca, a ghost or two had to haunt the place. I reminded them that the colorful manager told lots of stories about the place, but never said anything about ghostly activity. There were no customer or employee stories about ghosts in the restaurant and, more importantly, none of the local psychics and spiritualists that visited the property and talked about it reported anything that even resembled spirit activity.

It wasn't unreasonable to believe that the place might be haunted considering its history and the recent addition of the Casablanca set pieces, but I had come to know Merrill and Brodie well enough to believe that their ghost hunt idea had more to do with rebelling against their parents, than trying to find out if the restaurant was filled with ghosts. Fortunately, I was saved from having any part in their plan by a trip that my parents and I were taking to New York to visit relatives over part of Spring Break and Easter weekend.

Despite the fact that I wouldn't be able to join their ghost hunt, Merrill and Brodie wanted me to help convince the restaurant manager to allow them to stay overnight in the building and look for signs of paranormal activity. I said that I thought it was a bad idea and was certain that the manager would not like it at all. He had heard us talking about the paranormal during several of our meals at the restaurant and showed no interest in our conversation whatsoever. I wanted no part of any of it and sensed it would lead to nothing but trouble.

I knew that Merrill and Brodie were kind of upset with me, but I also knew that they understood that I couldn't afford to get in trouble with my parents. I had a lot of personal freedom which

allowed me to hang out with them and do lots of things. It could have been easy for me to forget that I was still a young teenager and a minor, but I never allowed that fact to drift too far from my thoughts whenever I had to make tough decision. I knew that if anything bad happened during their ghost hunt and my name was connected to it in any way, my parents would stop trusting me. That would be the end of my freedom to come and go places by myself.

Despite my warnings and objections, Merrill and Brodie went and talked to the restaurant manager about their idea. They hoped to obtain permission to stay in the restaurant overnight with adult supervision in the form of Brodie's driver or his head housekeeper. The restaurant manager thought it was a terrible idea and immediately declined. He didn't believe that the building was haunted and was unwilling to take on the responsibility of having two minors involved in some half-assed ghost hunt on the premises after hours, even with adult supervision.

I could see that Merrill and Brodie hated taking NO for an answer. They immediately started forming an alternative plan which involved a college kid that worked at the restaurant. Tommy was an eighteen year old that bussed tables, ran the dishwasher and cleaned up the place. He was almost always the first person to arrive and the last to leave. He was nice enough, but kind of flaky and had the hots for Merrill. He always came over to talk with us during breaks when we hung around the pier in back of the restaurant.

A student at St Petersburg Junior College, Tommy was always talking the boss into letting him have after hours parties in the restaurant banquet room. The boss let him get away with stuff like that because he did a lot of extra work without any extra pay. As long as the place was cleaned up, the manager didn't really care.

The banquet room could be accessed through the kitchen, while the other parts of the restaurant (including the bar and main dining room) were locked. Tommy usually collected a few bucks from the partygoers to pay for the kegs of beer and gave some to the Manager to cover the cost of any sodas or food that was used from the kitchen.

Tommy was always hitting on Merrill to come to one of the after hours parties. I'm sure he thought she was seventeen or eighteen years old because she was tall, but Merrill was only fourteen. She was smart and usually blew him off, but when Tommy invited her to an after hours party at the restaurant on Easter night, Merrill saw this as the perfect opportunity to turn her and Brodie's ghost hunt plan into a reality.

Merrill agreed to come to Tommy's after hours party as long as she could bring Brodie along. Tommy said to arrive at the restaurant around 10pm. The restaurant would close at 8pm that evening, so there would be plenty of time to get things ready for the party. Brodie's presence was fine with Tommy. He knew that Brodie was just a friend and thought he had a much better chance with Merrill than Brodie did anyway. In reality, Merrill thought that Tommy was a goof ball and had no interest in him at all.

I took Merrill aside and told her that I thought going to an after hours party with a bunch of older teenagers was a really bad idea. Brodie was used to doing crazy things, but this was sure to get her in big trouble with her folks. Besides the fact that I knew she would have to lie to her parents to go, I was worried about what would happen when the beer really started flowing. Brodie was fit, but he was still just a young teenager and couldn't possible stop some older guy from assaulting Merrill if he wanted to. She didn't listen to me, Brodie went along with Merrill and I am sorry to say that my conversation with them on that day was the last one I ever

had with either of them.
When I returned from New York and went back to school after Spring Break, the Academy was buzzing with news about Merrill even though she didn‘t attend school there. Being the daughter of an important Academy administration member made anything unusual or bad that happened in her life instant fodder for gossip. The scuttlebutt said that she was pulled out of the nearby girl’s prep school and shipped off to a boarding school in another state because of some scandal. Not wanting to put any pressure in her family by asking them about it, I tried getting hold of Brodie to find out if he knew what happened to her.

I tried calling Brodie, but his number no longer worked. I called the Marina where he yacht was docked to see if I could get a message to him. They said that it was no longer there and that really freaked me out. I was certain that all this had something to do with their ghost hunt idea and was really worried about my friends. I couldn’t imagine what happened during the week I was away that caused him and Merrill to vanish from the radar screen. I decided to approach Merrill’s cousin Rita. She came to the dance classes, so I had access to her there.

Rita wasn’t anything like Merrill. She had lots of girl pals, thought of herself as above everyone else and always tried to mix in with the rich girls even though she came from a working class background. Despite her snobby attitude, I knew that Rita would give me a straight answer if she was in the mood. After managing to get her alone for a minute, I asked her what was going on with Merrill.

Surprised that I hadn’t heard about what happened, Rita told me to call her later that evening and scribbled her phone number down for me. She rejoined her friends and went back to ignoring me. I waited until my folks went out that evening before I called her.

Whatever happened, I didn‘t want my parents thinking I had any connection to it. Rita answered the phone and was uncharacteristically nice to me. She couldn‘t wait to tell me the whole story and I knew that meant it was probably going to be bad news all around.

Rita began by telling me that she got the story directly from Merrill before she left for boarding school. It seemed that Brodie and Merrill followed through with their plan to stay the night at the restaurant in the Jungle Prada. Merrill told her family a tall tale about her friend being all alone on Easter night while her parents visited a sick relative out of town. She asked if she could stay over that night and help her friend watch the house. Because it was not like Merrill to lie to them, they believed her and agreed to her request. Merrill’s friend went along with the story, although she wasn’t happy about it.

Merrill’s dad dropped her off at her friend’s house early in the evening on Easter night. Brodie’s driver came and picked her up two hours later. The two hung out on his yacht until it was after nine o’clock and time to start their journey to the after hours party. Because his driver was off duty by then, Brodie called a taxi and they took it to the restaurant. They arrived to find that Tommy and some of his friends were already setting up the banquet room. They had music playing and were moving tables and chairs around to create enough room for a dance floor.

By 11pm the place was rocking. Filled with a mix of college age and senior high school boys and girls, the party spilled out from the banquet room onto a cement patio in the rear of the restaurant where kegs of beer were set up for the partygoers. Tommy was on the hunt for Merrill, but she played it cool after he found her and Brodie sitting down by the pier. They told Tommy that they didn’t like the smell of pot in the air near the patio. Neither of them used

drugs and said they were leaving. Tommy tried to change their minds, but the two walked towards the road like they were expecting a ride to pick them up.

After Tommy went back inside the banquet room, Merrill and Brodie walked back to the porch side of the restaurant. They managed to pry open a window that gave them access to the dining room area. After climbing inside and quickly closing the window, they sat down at one of the tables. The porch side windows filled the dining room with enough illumination from nearby street and parking lot lights to allow them to play cards and that's what they did for the next few hours.

Merrill and Brodie could hear music and loud voices coming from the banquet room in the rear of the restaurant. It was muffled, but still noisy and they wondered if all the activity from the after hours party might scare off any resident spirits. By three in the morning the noise from the banquet room stopped and they could hear cars exiting the parking lot. The beer must have run out and that signaled the end of the party. They heard Tommy locking the outside door to the kitchen just after three thirty and that meant they were now alone in the building.

Merrill told Rita that by the time the party ended, she and Brodie were bored and tired. They continued to play cards and talk to stay awake, but nothing out of the ordinary was happening. Fatigue and a lack of any apparent ghostly activity really took the luster off their little rebellion. Merrill indicated that she wished I had joined them. She loved my stories and I'm sure those would have helped to keep them alert. As it was, the only thing they stayed around was the fact that they would not be able to get a taxi to go anywhere until after six in the morning.

They were still playing cards and trying to keep each other awake when something finally did happen around four thirty in the

morning. Brodie spotted movement just to the right of the bar area and alerted Merrill. She swung around in her chair and later told Rita that she saw two shadowy figures heading towards the hallway that lead to the kitchen and restrooms. They appeared to lie down on or sink into a rubber mat in front of the kitchen door. Thinking they were just a couple of older teens that stayed around after the party ended and somehow managed to get into the restaurant area for some private hanky panky, Merrill an Brodie ignored them.

A few minutes later Merrill saw some more movement out of the corner of her eye. The shadows rose up from the floor in the hallway and started coming closer to the table where Merrill and Brodie were sitting. They panicked and tried to get out through the window, but were overcome by some force which knocked them both to the floor. Brodie hit his head so hard that he briefly lost consciousness. Merrill felt as though she had been slammed to the floor. She told Rita that she didn't see anyone, but felt something ripping at her clothes.

Brodie regained consciousness, saw that something which looked like a shadow was attacking Merrill and tried to help, but he felt pinned to the floor. Merrill said that he yelled several times at whatever was holding him down to let him go. After a couple of minutes, Brodie managed to fight off the force and get to his feet. Not knowing what else to do, he ran over to a set of switches and turned on all the lights. The attacks stopped and no one appeared to be in the restaurant except for them.

Brodie had scratches on his arm and looked as if he had been punched in the face. Merrill got up off the floor, regained her composure, went into the women's rest room and looked herself over in a full length mirror. She didn't appear to have any scratches or noticeable bruises. However, she became upset after

noticing that her blouse was open and the clasp on her jeans was broken.

After the reality of what happened set in, Merrill ran out of the restroom and became hysterical. She screamed a few times, and then tried to climb out of the porch window. The front door had a double lock. Afraid she would injure herself or get run over by a car on the road; Brodie sat her down at a table and suggested that she call her parents. He could see no other alternative. She sobbed uncontrollably for a short time, and then used the restaurant phone to call her folks. Unsure of what actually happened, they called the police and the police notified the restaurant manager.

The restaurant manager arrived with the police and unlocked the front door so they could gain entry. Merrill's parents got there a couple of minutes later. Almost immediately, the police were convinced that Brodie had attacked and tried to rape Merrill. The scratches on his arms and bruise on his face, as well as Merrill's damaged clothing, was proof positive of their theory as far as they were concerned. Merrill told her version of what happened, but was unable to convince the authorities that Brodie was not responsible for whatever happened to her. She pointed out that he had also been attacked and that she wasn't the one that scratched or punched him, but they would have none of it.

Brodie was arrested for assault and taken away. Merrill was allowed to go home with her parents. The restaurant manager was surprisingly understanding about the whole thing and said that he had no intention of filing any charges against Merrill or Brodie. I'm sure he was worried about any legal repercussions that might come from allowing teenagers and persons under 21 years of age to use his banquet room after business hours and drink beer on the premises.

The story of what happened to Brodie and Merrill in the restaurant

that night took on a life of its own. It was their bad luck that a local TV news crew happened to be in the police facility covering another story when Brodie was brought in. After hearing that the daughter of a prominent Farragut Academy administration member and the son of wealthy parents that lived on a yacht in the nearby marina had been attacked by what they claimed were unseen forces in a building where Capone's Gangplank Club once existed, there was no way they were not going to cover the story.

By the time Brodie's parents arrived in town with their lawyers and Merrill finished giving her own statement to a family lawyer and the local prosecutor, their little adventure was all over local broadcast news. Academy political influence kept the story out of the newspaper, but the TV stations ran wild with it and most everyone that lived in the Tampa/St Petersburg area heard about what happened at the restaurant.

Despite appearances, there was no evidence that Brodie attacked Merrill. Her own statement refuted the police theory and a visit to her doctor proved that she hadn't been raped. Without any legal complaint from the restaurant owner, the authorities could no longer hold Brodie in custody. Brodie was released to his parents. The case, if there had ever been any, had no where to go and neither of the teens ended up being charged with anything.

Brodie's parents pulled him out of Farragut and placed him in an overseas boarding school. The family yacht was gone from the local marina less than two days after the restaurant incident. Merrill was grounded for life and it was obvious that she would not be able to remain at the local girl's prep school after all the publicity. She was shipped off to an out of state boarding school to give her a chance to get over what happened and avoid further attention being drawn to the scandal. Her father was told he would be able to keep his position at Farragut, but he resigned and left the school

as soon as that semester ended and summer vacation began.

Rita spoke with Merrill after telling me what happened at the restaurant. I wanted to call Merrill and offer any support and help I could, but she told Rita that contact between us or with anyone connected with Brodie with be a bad idea. I understood completely and let it stay at that. I tried tracking down Brodie a few times, but had no success. After having to leave friends behind on Long Island when we moved to Florida, it was not easy for me to lose two new ones that I had just gotten to know.

I stopped by the restaurant from time to time and finally got to speak with Tommy. He was clueless about what happened to Merrill and Brodie. He thought they went home just as the after hours party was getting started and had no idea they were in the dining room area. Whatever happened to them, he was certain it had nothing to do with his party. He made sure all the guests left before locking up and pointed out that there was really no way to get from the banquet room into the dining room area with the kitchen door locked.

The restaurant manager was angry with Tommy and made it clear there would be no more after hours parties at the restaurant, but he wasn't upset enough to fire him. In reality, all the publicity actually caused a brief boom in business at the place and many first time diners became regulars after discovering its charm. Those as curious about the paranormal as I was also visited the eatery, but none of them went on the record saying it was haunted.

Looking back on Merrill and Brodie's ghost hunt still leaves me with many unanswered questions. I really don't know what happened that night. I spent enough time with them to know that they didn't drink or get high, so any explanation that included those factors could be ruled out. As far as the shadows go, Rita seemed convinced that Merrill's account of what happened was

truthful and correct. Rita loved salacious stories and scandals, as long as they weren't about her. If she thought that Merrill was lying, she would have said so.

Shadow people are not a new phenomenon and ghosts have been known to attack the living, but shadow people do not normally attempt the kind of physical contact that was described by Merrill and Brodie. The theory that the attackers were fugitive party goers also made no sense. I could easily see there would have been no way inside the dining room except for the porch windows and anyone trying to get in that way would have been immediately noticed by Merrill and Brodie. If they came in through a porch window before my friends, how had they managed to remain so quiet and still for so long and why would they?

The police theory that Brodie attacked Merrill was a possibility, but unlikely. I spent enough time with them to know that there wasn't anything remotely physical going on between them. Even if his teenage hormones had suddenly kicked in while they were alone in the restaurant, I was certain that Brodie would not have tried to force himself on Merrill. She was tall, strong and could have easily resisted him. Even if they started something by mutual consent and she suddenly changed her mind, I knew she would have had no trouble curbing Brodie's enthusiasm.

Because I returned from our family trip to New York just in time to return to school after Spring Break, I missed all the local TV news coverage about their adventure at the restaurant. I had to get the story from Rita, but she probably knew more about what happened than the media did. Her information came directly from Merrill and, at that point, neither of them had any reason to lie or embellish what happened. Even with all the information I had, it was hard to know what actually happened or if something paranormal was involved.

As so often happens with strange events that leave us with more questions than answers, we sometimes have to file them under the category of the unexplained. Such is the case with Merrill and Brodie's ghost hunt adventure. If there were ghosts or malevolent spirits in the restaurant, they hadn't shown themselves to anyone else as far as I knew. That doesn't mean they weren't there or that they couldn't have been connected to one or both of my friends in some other way. It just means that I really have no way of saying that the place was really haunted or that my friends were attacked by ghosts.

I still visited the Jungle Prada from time to time, but started avoiding the restaurant except when my parents decided that we would go there to eat. However, the Prada wasn't done with me yet as you'll discover later.

Chapter Three The Colonel, Mary Ann, The Little People, The Ghosts and High School

My experience at Farragut had been fascinating, but not academically or socially satisfying enough to justify the cost to my parents. I felt guilty that they were paying a small fortune for tuition and asked if I could attend public high school. They agreed and I was relieved. The local high school was well spoken of and offered a varied curriculum. Although Farragut was an excellent school in many ways, most of the students were unhappy and that made for a very uncomfortable scholastic atmosphere.

I successfully completed ninth grade, having spent a small part of the first semester at the lackluster public junior high school, and the rest of the academic year at Farragut. Because we arrived in Florida just in time for me to begin school the previous fall, this would be my first summer in Florida. While I expected my summer break to be a lazy and boring time, it turned out to be anything but that.

That first summer in Florida was a busy time for my parents. My dad had a few personal meetings with the Texas Millionaire that owned the resort where he was working. They hit it off really well. My father found himself with more responsibilities at the resort and a themed shopping center across the street. Mom loved her job at the hospital and decided to start working towards her Master's Degree by taking some evening courses at a local college. That left me with lots of time on my hands and I found all kinds of ways to fill it.

The guy that found us our new house lived a couple of houses away on a corner lot. We called him The Colonel. My father went over the see him a couple of nights a week and I know he appreciated the company. They had served together in the military and used to visit each other frequently when The Colonel lived in the northeast. Now that they were neighbors and lived a long distance from so many of their other friends, they spent more time together and that worked out for both of them.

The Colonel lived on a lot that was almost half again bigger than most of the other lots on our street and that meant he had a lot of lawn to cut. He was a retired Army Colonel who had seen a lot of action in his career and hated how much age had slowed him down. Partially disabled, both he and his wife had health problems that prevented them from doing a lot of physically demanding work. Lawn mowing was an activity that was out of the question for them and that's where I came into the picture.

After visiting his house with my father a few times, The Colonel asked if I would take on the responsibility of mowing his lawn and doing some gardening until he could find a landscaper that wouldn't quit on him. He went through quite a few of them, because he had very high standards and hated sloppy work. I agreed and the extra money came in handy. I hated lawn work, but

I really liked The Colonel and his wife.

Like my father, The Colonel didn't talk much about his days in the military. They met while serving in the South Pacific during World War Two and became friends after working closely together for some time. The Colonel was older than my dad and I got the impression that he had been his mentor. He was strict, but thoughtful, and often brought out cold drinks to me while I was mowing his lawn and gardening.

The Colonel and my father worked on General MacArthur's Staff during World War II. Based on conversations that I heard between them, I knew they both contributed to the completion of the MacArthur's Report that was based on Foo Fighter sightings in the South Pacific during World War II. That certainly wasn't their only duty, but it was the part of their military service that most interested me.

Even after getting in trouble over the Foo Fighter report I gave in elementary school, the subject still fascinated me. My father didn't like talking about them anymore, so I hoped that I might eventually get a comment or two from The Colonel. I knew that I would have to approach the subject very carefully and couldn't just come out and ask him questions about them, so I played the waiting game and kept mowing his lawn.

Being new in the neighborhood and living in a place where there were more retirees than anything else made it hard to find friends that were anywhere close to my own age. Fortunately, The Colonel's son lived across the street from us and had a daughter named Mary Ann. After meeting her, I found out that we had a lot in common. Both of us had no brothers or sisters and were the same age. We became fast friends and started hanging out with each other.

Just as I was getting to know Mary Ann during my first two weeks of summer vacation, her dad enlisted her to help with phones at his home improvement business. His regular phone gal was having a baby and out for at least a couple of weeks. This was his busiest time of year and everyone in the family pitched in to help. Knowing how hard my own parents worked, I understood and appreciated their situation.

Things usually worked out for me, even when it seems that nothing is going my way. Just after Mary Ann started working for her dad, a kid named Toby called me out of the blue. I met Toby during my brief time at the public Junior High School and we started hanging out together during breaks and study halls. He didn't believe in the paranormal, but some events were about to occur in his life that would cause him to consider the possibility that not everything was as simple as it seemed.

Toby's mom died a few years ago after a short bout with cancer. His father, Larry, was devastated and could barely get up in the morning. He lost his job and was living off some money he received from his late wife's life insurance policy. All he did for almost eight months after her death was read the newspaper and watch television. It was during that time that he noticed how many Handyman Specials were available in the real estate section of the paper. It gave him an idea.

Larry started buying distressed homes with the remainder of the life insurance money. His brother, Jonathan, joined him in the new venture. Both men had some experience with painting and carpentry. They were mutual friends with a licensed plumber named Bobby who threw some money and his professional skills into the pot. Together, the three bought, renovated and resold homes in the area. The venture turned out to be very profitable, so they kept at it.

Larry and Jonathan were lucky enough to find an older, one floor house for sale at a bargain price in a very quiet section of St Petersburg. The home was clean, but almost everything in it was out of date and the landscaping needed work. The three friends worked on the house and property for weeks. They painted, put in new carpeting, a new central air conditioning unit, replaced floors and remodeled the bathroom and kitchen.

Once all the work was completed, Larry took on the responsibility of placing the remodeled home on the market. Unlike previous homes that seemed to sell in no time at all, this one was just not moving and the three partners couldn't understand why. The house looked great, the neighborhood was quiet and the market was good. People would look at the house and seem impressed, but wouldn't buy.

Thinking that it seemed too empty, they purchased some inexpensive furniture to give the place a lived-in look. To help things move along, the partners asked Toby's older sister, Maryanne, and her husband, Jeff, to stay there until the place was sold. The young couple had helped them sell two other homes and earned four hundred dollars each time in the process. They were attending a local college, short on money and glad to get a break from staying with relatives for a few weeks. However, lodging in this particular house wouldn't be much of a break.

The house sitting couple had only been in the home for a week when a flood occurred in the bathroom. Assuming it was a leak, they called Toby's dad. Larry came by and looked for the source of the flooding. After turning off the water supply to the house, the water continued flowing on to the bathroom floor from what appeared to be all directions. Just as he was about to call his partner Bobby the plumber, the flooding stopped.

Unable to locate a leak and with no obvious damage to the

bathroom or anyplace else in the house, Larry vacuumed up the excess water and decided to leave it at that. This happened on a Monday. He would come back with his brother and Bobby over the weekend to check everything and look for any possible cause of the flooding. However, before the weekend arrived, something else happened.

Maryanne stepped into the shower the next morning and started feeling sick. Within minutes, she became violently ill. She barely made it out of the bathroom before feeling weak and falling to the floor. Jeff heard the ruckus and came to her aid. He drove her to the hospital and waited for news.

Slightly overweight, they tested her for diabetes and considered a number of other possible medical conditions. Everything came back negative and she seemed fine again. Maryanne was released after two days. During the ride home, Jeff told her about an unusual experience he had while she was in the hospital.

Between the incident with Maryanne and rushing to get some assignments completed for school, Jeff was exhausted. Once back home, he quickly fell into a deep sleep. But that didn't last long. Jeff woke up in the middle of the night after hearing a crash. The crash noise was followed by a banging sound that seemed to be coming from the bathroom.

Jeff got up to investigate, but found nothing out of place. All the doors were locked and no one was in the house. He noticed the time on the lighted clock radio next to the bed. It was almost two thirty in the morning. Too tired to worry about it further, Jeff went back to sleep. However, less than ninety minutes later, Jeff woke up again to a loud banging sound again coming from the bathroom.

As he reached the hallway outside of the bathroom, the noise

stopped. Not knowing what to think, he wondered if this was a problem with the water pipes and decided to call Larry about it in the morning. He went back to bed and things remained quiet for the rest of the night.

Maryanne was troubled by Jeff's story and didn't know what to think. She had never become suddenly ill before and wondered why everything seemed to center around the bathroom. Maybe her dad and his partners could figure it all out.

Larry, Jonathan and Bobby arrived at the house on Saturday morning ready to troubleshoot the situation. They checked pipes, looked for squirrels or rats in the attic, flushed the toilet a dozen times and ran water in the bathtub to see if any leaks occurred. They found nothing, but Bobby thought of another possibility.

Bathrooms in houses of this type had wall access areas covered with large metal or wooden plates. Once unscrewed, the plates could easily be removed to allow access to points where pipes or electric wiring intersected within the wall. Although they had already removed the two plates where pipes were present and inspected those areas in the bathroom, there were two more located on the other side of the bathroom wall.

Bobby knew that some homeowners had a bad habit of using these open areas in their walls for storage of paint or potentially hazardous liquids. If the liquids started to leak out of their containers, they might cause wall erosion. That would allow any water accumulated from leaky window casements to get out and flood the bathroom floor. Noxious fumes from the same improperly stored liquids could build up inside the walls and be released into the bathroom through wall vents. That might explain Maryanne's sudden illness.

They went to the other room to remove the wall access plates and

find out if the previous homeowner had left anything inside the walls. Removal of the first plate revealed nothing but a transformer and some wiring for the doorbell. The second was located close to the outside wall of the house. While they were removing it, the banging sound started and then stopped suddenly. Once open, they found nothing. The three were mystified. Larry and Bobby went around to the side of the house to inspect the outside wall. They saw no cracks or other problems that might account for the noises or flooding.

While all this was going on, Jeff remarked that hearing the banging sounds during the day when he was fully awake reminded him of something. His father was a shooting enthusiast who had taught Jeff how to handle guns. He lost interest in them during his teens and didn't own any, but he recalled the sounds of weapons being fired at shooting ranges. To him, the "banging" noises resembled weapons fire from a distance. With no shooting ranges nearby and the noises being heard in the middle of the night as well as during the day, it seemed an unlikely explanation to the others. The partners left without finding a cause for the unusual occurrences. The house remained quiet until a week and a half later.

Maryanne and Jeff arrived home around one o'clock in the morning from a concert at the Bay Front Center downtown. After the concert, they went out for some burgers at a Big Boy Restaurant with another couple. Maryanne felt strangely uncomfortable during the concert and became suddenly ill at the restaurant. Not wanting to upset the others, she quietly excused herself from the table and went into the rest room to throw up. During the short drive home, she told Jeff what had happened and he mentioned that he wasn't feeling well either. Both were sick to their stomachs.

As they pulled into the driveway, Maryanne noticed a slight glow

coming from a hallway window that was directly across from the bathroom. They didn't remember leaving any lights on and hurried in thinking there might be a fire. Once they entered the house, there was a terrible smell like something had died and the couple both became violently ill. The glow was still noticeable and seemed to come from the bathroom. It was a steady, but ethereal light that seemed unnatural and impossible to pin down. The loud banging noise started again and added to the bizarre scene.

Despite being practically bent over in pain, Jeff moved toward the bathroom to find the source of the glow. When he got to the door, he felt a strange fear that kept him from entering or looking inside. Maryanne threw up on the floor in the living room entryway and managed to get to a wall phone in the kitchen. She dialed her father for help. While still on the phone with Larry, the banging stopped and the glow vanished. She told her dad that they were leaving the house, hung up, grabbed a few things and checked into the Howard Johnson's Motel at the beach.

Larry called Jonathan and the two came over to the house around two in the morning to have a look around. Once again, everything was quiet. No lights, no banging noises and no smells. However, while the two men were there by themselves, each heard what sounded like loud voices off in the distance. They went outside to investigate, but the sounds seemed to be coming from inside the house. They locked the place up and left.

I was amazed by the story that Toby told me, but he was very upset. He wondered if this had something to do with his deceased mother? He wanted answers and I didn't know what to say. I did remind him that most of the reliable books I had read about ghosts and haunted places pointed out that most supernatural phenomenon had some connection to the current or previous owners of the house. That would tend to rule out his mother.

Without saying it, I felt this might not be about Ghosts at all. I had read about situations where a force was at work that went well beyond the norm of what we might think of as Ghostly activity. However, checking for ghosts was an easy way to begin the investigation.

I invited two adult members of a local Spiritualist Church to come and interview some of the people involved and see the house for themselves. Janet and Beatrice were two elderly women who had been participants in the Spiritualist movement for many years. I met them at a seminar on ESP just months before. They invited me to visit their Church, so I attended a few services and social events. I looked at it as a chance to learn more about Spiritualism and it certainly was a different experience.

I rode with Janet and Beatrice to the troubled house. Maryanne and Jeff greeted us. They were standing outside and had refused to go back into the house by themselves ever since the incident a week and a half before. Larry and Jonathan arrived around the same time and told us that they had been in the house twice since then, examined everything all over again and still found nothing to account for what the couple experienced. Toby wasn't there.

We all entered the house together. Janet and Beatrice were calm and didn't seem to sense anything. I was cautiously optimistic about their abilities, but hadn't much exposure to the whole Spiritualism thing apart from books and attending their services a few times. They certainly seemed honest and sincere. Both were professional women who worked in the banking industry for many years before their retirement.

After a walk through the house, we sat quietly and listened to the small group explain what had happened in their own words. I took some notes and ran a five-inch reel-to-reel recorder in hopes of getting all the stories right and possibly picking up some EVP

(Electronic Voice Phenomenon). Larry and Jonathan were skeptical of our investigation, but something had to account for all this and the business partners were out of ideas. Janet and Beatrice asked very few questions and simply allowed those present to vent.

Being the youngest person there, I sat quietly and took it all in. As Spiritualist Mediums, the two women claimed to have the ability to receive messages from the dead. They could also sense dark forces, but rarely spoke of such things. On that night, they sensed nothing. According to them, this was beyond unusual and almost unprecedented. They later explained to me that it was as if something was jamming their abilities. I had the same result from my attempt to capture any EVP. There wasn't any that I could detect.

The revelations from the Spiritualists and the lack of any EVP fueled my fear that this was not a garden-variety ghost event. It was also possible that the whole thing was some kind of set up. I recalled going to a speech by an experienced paranormal investigator from New England. Ironically, he had been born near Salem and actually lived in what he felt was a haunted house as a child. He reminded the crowd of wannabe ghost chasers that two things would always haunt them more than ghosts: Over-enthusiasm and fakery. It made me wonder if I was reading more into the events at the house then I should have been.

While I trusted Toby, it was always possible that someone was creating all this hype for his or her own reasons. It wouldn't be the first time that a paranormal investigator had been used as a catalyst to make an unusual occurrence appear to be supernatural in origin. I decided to take a step back and rethink the entire sequence of events. While I was in the process of doing that, I became quite ill. It was like an attack of the flu with real teeth. I couldn't even get out of bed for two days, and then I suddenly felt fine. Was it

connected to the house? There was no way to tell.

Janet and Beatrice went back to their Church and sought guidance from the other members. As they considered the matter, several members became ill. Janet eventually ended up in the hospital with symptoms not unlike what Maryanne experienced. Beatrice started having terrible headaches. Was the power of this thing was spreading? Maybe, but I reminded myself that Janet, Beatrice and the majority of Church members were elderly and may have already had preexisting medical problems.

Toby remained on the outside of this situation, but now I needed his help. We got together and canvassed the neighborhood where the house was located. Without being specific, we wondered if the neighbors noticed anything odd about the previous owners or the house. If they asked us why we wanted to know, we just said that Toby was the son of the new owners and they were having problems with the property. Despite our best efforts, none of the people that bothered to answer their doors had any helpful information. Toby's father didn't do any better after calling the previous owners.

According to Larry, the place had an uninteresting history. Built in the early 1960s, it had been owned by a family who moved to Florida from Philadelphia. A couple with two kids lived in the house until their children moved out. Larry had already spoken with the couple on several occasions during the process of purchasing the house. They didn't seem like people with some deep, dark secret. He called them again and asked if they had ever encountered anything strange like the flood or banging noises. They said nothing like that had ever happened while they lived there. The couple had always lacked the funds to modernize the place, but they had kept up the infrastructure with regular repairs and maintenance when it was required.

It was a Saturday, just a month after Toby first told me about the house. I had about given up on solving the mystery of what was happening in that place when I received a call from him. He was breathless. With Maryanne and Jeff out of the house and refusing to return, Toby and his dad stopped by to check on the still unsold property every few days. They arrived at the house that morning to find the entire block filled with police cars.

According to some people standing out in the street, a man who lived in the house next to the one up for sale by the partners had gone berserk. Already known to be a drunk and wife beater, he started shooting at his neighbors with a hunting rifle. A few people mowing their lawns or washing their cars had been hit, but none had life threatening injuries.
The police arrived and just as they were about to move in, he shot himself in the head with a .32 caliper pistol he kept around for self-defense. He died almost instantly. It was later determined that the Shooter was highly intoxicated at the time of the incident and that the shots were random. Fortunately, no one died or was seriously injured as a result of his rampage.

Although big news for about a day and a half, the police tape had been removed from around the house less than two weeks later. The surviving relatives of the Shooter, his estranged wife and two daughters, arrived to settle matters with the property. They quickly moved to clean up and place the house up for sale. After being the victims of his alcoholism for many years, his wife walked out and took the children with her. That happened about two months before the man went berserk.

For a couple of weeks after the shootings, I really didn't know what to think. Larry, Toby and I spent a couple of weekends in the house that they were still trying to sell. There were no noises, floods or unusual activity. The Spiritualists didn't return, but were

recovering from whatever it was that had made the ill. Marianne and Jeff decided to get back on the horse that threw them by returning to the house. They did not experience any unusual phenomenon during that time and the property finally sold three weeks later.

Toby's father had been the doubting Thomas of the group all along. He just could not conceive of anything otherworldly causing the problems in that house. Larry wanted to think of his late wife in heaven, not floating around like a vapor. That seemed to be the primary motivation behind his skepticism. At first hostile to my age and the fact that I believed in things related to the paranormal, he changed his mind after I explained to him that I didn't believe this had anything to do with ghosts. The theory I offered him at that time remains my view of what happened I that house today.

Without understanding what really happened, I somehow felt that the neighbor's shooting outburst and suicide were connected to the unusual activity in the house. Three things convinced me of that. First, the problems began in the house owned by the partners just around the time that the dead man's wife and children had left him. Second, the Spiritualists were unable to sense anything because the living, not the dead, had caused the disturbances. Third, the bathroom window faced the shooter's house and was directly opposite the window of the room where he died.

It might be hard for most people to believe that a troubled alcoholic's mental state could have anything to be with the things that happened in that house. That's because science has consistently rejected the idea that people can use their minds to manipulate their environment. It's only been in recent decades that we've learned how governments have used those with the ability to perform Remote Viewing to gather intelligence on their enemies and rivals. However, that's not all they have attempted.

Sometime during the twentieth century the governments of the United States and Soviet Russia became convinced that some people could create a live and accurate mental picture of events happening elsewhere just by using their mind. In some cases, individuals targeted for espionage by remote viewers became unexpectedly ill.

Several American Presidents and other high-ranking government officials suffered from extreme headaches or became suddenly ill after traveling to Russia during the 1980s and 1990s. Experts theorized that microwave radiation being aimed at pre-positioned intelligence gathering devices was the culprit. No one thought to consider the possibility that remote viewers might be the problem.

Once the side effects of Remote Viewing became known, it didn't take those in charge of these secret programs long to figure out that this extra sensory mental highway might have two lanes instead of one. Some Remote Viewers had minds or abilities powerful enough to do more than just gather a mental picture of events happening elsewhere. They were able to enter the minds of their targets. Apart from intelligence gathering, this ability could also be used to mentally harass or even kill people.

Apart from the moral questions that arise from all this, you have to wonder if these kinds of abilities are limited to the conscious level of the mind. It wouldn't be hard to imagine the damage that someone could cause if their unconscious mind could access that kind of power and cause it to act (almost like an emotion) anytime they had strong feelings about something or someone.

Because no one was actually in the home of the Shooter during the weeks before the event, it's impossible to know if any unexplained events were taking place. However, even if nothing had happened in there, it would not be a reason to believe that he had nothing to do with what happened in the home for sale. We must remember

that we're not talking about ghosts or a haunting, but rather the possibility of someone with the ability to project thoughts into actions.

After Toby started hanging out at my house, Margaret also showed up out of no where. Margaret was Scottish and came here from the UK after her dad landed an engineering job in nearby Tampa just a year before I arrived in St Pete. She had been my savior during the first few weeks at the public junior high school. I met her in English class in a most unique way. It was the time when Apollo 13 ran into trouble on their way to the Moon. Our English teacher kept talking about it and we all did reports on the Apollo program.

While reading my report out loud, I happened to mention the fact that there were stories which indicated that the astronauts of Apollo 11 might have seen UFOs several times during their mission. The English teacher dismissed it as nonsense, but Margaret was fascinated by the whole thing and stopped me in the hallway to talk about it after class. I loved her Scottish account. We ate lunch together and I discovered that she had an interest in the unexplained.

Having attended the public junior high for a year before I got there, she knew her way around the place and helped me to navigate its old and decrepit corridors. Margaret was an amazingly intelligent and upbeat person with a wonderful personality and a curious nature. I enjoyed her company and appreciated her insights on any number of things. I alternatively hung out with Toby and Margaret throughout the school day until I left for Farragut.

I stayed in touch with Margaret over the phone, but we could never seem to get together in person. I couldn't have been more surprised when she showed up at my door one day while Toby was over. She visited my house a couple of times before while I was still at the junior high and was fascinated by my huge library

of paranormal books. I introduced her to Toby, but he was still in the He-Man Woman Haters Club teenage development stage.

Toby resented Margaret's interest in the unexplained, because he could have cared less about it all, especially after the incident with the house that his dad had refurbished. He hoped that what was happening was from some kind of message from his deceased mother. When he discovered the cause was something completely different, he felt angry and again turned his back on anything supernatural. Toby also felt that Margaret was using her fascination with the paranormal to horn in on our friendship. I eventually calmed him down and pointed out that I enjoyed his company as much as hers.

When she wasn't in school, Margaret dressed like a gypsy and the kids that saw her off campus thought she was a witch. She loved to draw Celtic symbols and was always talking about how she believed in ancient mysticism. That was a really bad idea in a town known to have more churches than most any other of its size.

As you can imagine, she didn't have very many friends in our area and that was one reason she gravitated towards me. I really didn't care how she dressed and found her interest in mysticism and the unexplained to be refreshing. In fact, Margaret's arrival provided another opportunity for me to study the paranormal first hand.

In addition to his work as an engineer, her dad purchased a large warehouse in downtown St Pete just a month or so before Margaret reconnected with me. The previous owner had to sell due to health problems, but the place was nicely profitable thanks to a contract with several moving companies. People that moved to the area using those companies and wanted their things placed in storage had their items stored at that warehouse.

From the moment that Margaret first entered the warehouse, she

was convinced it was haunted. The building was once a school and a local rumor said that the place was built over a graveyard. She couldn't wait to show it to me, so Margaret and her dad came by my house and picked me up one Saturday morning so that I could visit the place with them.

The building existed somewhere on the south side of St Pete near downtown. It was an older neighborhood which had moved from residential to industrial. There were still a few old houses nearby and a couple of disused parks, but small manufacturing and distribution companies dominated the area. The four story warehouse didn't look at all scary to me. It was a freshly painted, well-kept building with nicely landscaped grounds and palm trees encircling the outside.

It was easy to see that the place was originally built to be a school, but cement walls replaced most of what had been classroom windows and large, industrial sized elevators filled the spaces that were once occupied by stairwells. The inside was really huge and the place looked busy. Even on the weekend that I visited, people were coming and going everywhere with moving trucks, vans and cars. A constant parade of people, warehouse workers and moving crews with hand trucks moved in and out of the huge facility. Margaret's dad, Cameron, had obviously made a good investment.

He knew that although his career as an Engineer was going well, it wasn't recession proof and the early 1970s was an unpredictable time in terms of employment and the economy. Cameron decided to take some savings that he and his wife had and invest in the warehouse. A friend of his that also came here from the UK made a similar investment on the east coast of Florida and was doing very well.

Cameron visited the warehouse several times a week. He strongly believed in watching over his investment and did so diligently. His

manager and three employees stayed on from the previous owner and kept the place running like clockwork. It was profitable from day one, but there was one problem that never seemed to go away. The second floor had a history of unexplained events associated with it and was never able to be used to its full potential. Margaret said it was haunted from the first time she visited there, but her dad really wasn't sure.

Cameron wasn't interested in the paranormal, but he and his wife had a healthy respect for the unexplained and saw nothing wrong with their daughter's interest in Celtic mysticism. Margaret told him some of the stories I shared with her, including my most recent from the Jungle Prada. He wondered what I thought about the possibility that part of the second floor might be haunted. I marveled at how many times adults asked a young teen like me about the paranormal.

I suggested that he allow me to speak with his employees and he said that was fine. When it appeared they weren't too busy, I politely asked the manager and his three workers about the second floor. The manager got a cut of the business, and the employees received a steady flow of tips from people as they loaded and unloaded items in and out of storage. These were good jobs, so they were more than happy to cooperate.

In his forties when we spoke, the manager told me that he was hired as a warehouse worker at the building in the late 1950s. He gave me a quick run down of the history and strangeness of the place. He said that the building was constructed in the 1930s and alternatively used as an elementary and middle school until the mid-1950s. Replaced by newer schools built throughout the area, the building was closed down and remained vacant for a couple of years until it was sold.

The new owner hired a construction company to convert the

building into a warehouse. That meant a facelift outside and lots of demolished walls inside to create the huge spaces and storage areas needed for its new purpose. The building was in the last stages of being converted from a school to a warehouse when the manager started working there. Some of the construction workers that were finishing off the inside areas of the building were the first to tell him about the strange happenings on the second floor.

The work crew reported strange sounds, odd smells and power problems. Noises that sounded like muffled whispers were heard on a regular basis. Most of the workman assumed it was background noise or voices from workers on the other floors, but the sounds were heard even when no one else was in the building. The smell of stale flowers was often present. That lead some of the construction workers that happened to live in the area to repeat the old rumor that the school had been built over an abandoned graveyard.

They believed the odors came from flowers left on graves that had long been covered over. Some were certain that the odors represented a rebellion of the spirits of the dead that had been forgotten about when the school was originally built over their graves. That could have been true, but why was the smell only prevalent on the second floor? The same question could apply to the muffled voices and the fact that newly installed power outlets often failed on that floor. No such electrical problems were reported elsewhere in the building. Even after the conversion was complete, problems on the second floor continued.

The three workers that I spoke to were hired just after the manager and had been working at the warehouse since it first began operations in the late 1950s. All of them said they heard the whispers, smelled the flowery odors and experienced the power outlet problems originally reported by the construction crew. The

manager and one of the workers also had another unexplained experience that was far more troubling.

While discussing the possible placement of some large pieces of furniture in storage on the second floor sometime during the late 1960s, they felt a sudden rush of ice cold air. Parts of the building were air conditioned to prevent mildew and better serve the needs of some of their clients. Thinking that the air was malfunctioning, they walked to the stairs to go down to the first floor and check out the air flow controls. Before they were able to step out on to the stairs, they saw something move rapidly in front of them.

Whatever it was, it looked to them like a small group of people stuck together. This occurred during the afternoon when daylight was streaming in through the small windows that illuminated the stairway. Even in daylight, the experience was bone chilling and hard to explain. No one else was present on the second floor at that time and the figures they saw were anything but a hallucination. A few customers and some moving crews reported similar incidents over the years.

Although the story was compelling, Cameron knew that people sometimes find themselves in unusual circumstances which cause them to mistake the ordinary for the unexplained. By way of example, he told me a story from his teen years in Scotland. While he and a friend were driving to a party through a quiet stretch of road in the Scottish highlands in 1953, they saw what looked like people in very old style clothing walking out of a clearing surrounded by a mist and became frightened.

Cameron and his friend believed they were witnessing the awakening of Brigadoon, a town which allegedly went to sleep in 1754. Legend has it that the inhabitants reawaken and appear to the world for just one day every one hundred years. Since it was almost exactly two hundred years since the town went to sleep, it

wasn't absurd for them to believe that the legend might actually be true. After all, the people they saw seemed disconnected from reality, were surrounded by a strange mist and ignored everything going on around them.

After pulling the car over to the side of the road, the two teens covered their eyes with their hands. They were afraid that the residents of Brigadoon were returning to sleep instead of waking up and might take them back with them. A few minutes later a police vehicle pulled along side their car and told them to get back on the road and take a detour marked by signs. Cameron and his friend alerted the constables to the presence of the oddly-dressed people and told them that they should cover their eyes to avoid disappearing into Brigadoon.

The police officers had a good laugh at the expense of the superstitious teens. It turned out that a film company was shooting a movie up the road and the police were there to keep oncoming cars off the location set and away from the area. That easily explained the manufactured mist and why the actors were so preoccupied with what they were doing that they tended to ignore any traffic or other distractions in the area.

Cameron made his point, but that didn't explain what had happened to the manager and worker, as well as others that experienced strange things on the second floor of the warehouse. When Margaret first walked through the building with her dad, she felt very uncomfortable when they reached the second floor. A feeling of dread filled her mind and she couldn't wait to leave. Not everyone had that type of experience, but enough people saw or felt things on that floor to make it a place of interest for paranormal investigation.

Although the warehouse was relatively busy most of the time, the manager never placed short term storage items on the second floor.

Customers that visited there often complained about flickering lights, odd smells and some said that their boxes had been moved around. Rather than try and explain the odd events to them, the manager placed long-term storage items there for customers that required those services. Most of those people never came by and had their items brought in and taken out again by movers.

Even when long term storage items were present in locked and secured areas on the second floor, the warehouse workers sometimes found furniture and other items moved around when they checked on them. The manager used that floor as little as possible and avoided the place like the plague. Whether they actually believed the place was haunted or not, all of them had a healthy respect for the fact that the living didn't seem to be welcome there.

After hearing all the stories, I was at a loss to explain what was going on. While looking for possible solutions to this situation, I recalled an article that I read in some electronics-themed magazine about electromagnetic fields and their effect on the body and mind. The article was about people that lived near towers that carried high tension electrical wires. These people reported everything from unexplained illnesses to hallucinations, and many felt that the electrical wires were to blame.

I asked Margaret's dad if he ever had the second floor checked for exposed or improperly installed wiring. He told me that the previous owner had the wiring in the entire building inspected before he sold the place. It passed with flying colors. Cameron also had the second floor wiring inspected after several electrical outlets didn't work. When the electrician tried using them, they worked fine. He inspected the wiring and found that all of it had been properly installed, was working fine and up to code. After he left, the outlets began to malfunction again.

In an attempt to gain more time to figure out what was going on, I told Margaret and her dad that if this was a haunting, the ghosts hadn't really affected the operation or profitability of the warehouse. They might have frightened a few people and had others scratching their heads about what was going on, but that's all. Any number of things could have explained why some boxes and furniture had been moved around and the space was ultimately used if it was needed anyway. I suggested that they leave sleeping dogs lay for the present.

The warehouse represented an interesting paranormal puzzle, but I was only half-heartedly interested in solving it. After what happened at the Jungle Prada restaurant, I wasn't sure how involved I wanted to become when it came to investigating reports of ghostly activity. The more I thought about what happened to Merrill and Brodie, the more I felt they might have awakened some supernatural force that may never had bothered anyone if it had been left well enough alone. I didn't want to take the chance of opening some supernatural Pandora's Box in the warehouse that might be harmful to Margaret, her dad, their family or the workers.

I began thumbing through some magazines I saved that featured articles about ghosts, ghost hunting, haunted houses and other paranormal subjects. One of them mentioned a way to record ghostly voices or otherworldly noises. People were leaving reel to reel and audio cassette recorders in places where ghosts might be present. They would later retrieve the machines and listen to the tapes. Occasionally, messages from spirits and other weird noises were allegedly recorded. Today this is generically called Electronic Voice Phenomenon.

I had an old reel to reel tape recorder that my parents gave me a few years back. After a head cleaning, it worked fine and I decided to try my hand at capturing a ghost on tape. My first attempt was a

test run at home. I set up the microphone, pressed the record button and sat quietly while my parents were out hoping to capture spirit noises. The tape speed was set on high for best quality. I turned it off after an hour and rewound the tape. Apart from the sounds of a few noisy birds, an occasional car driving past, the refrigerator going on and off and the air conditioning blower doing its thing, there were no unusual voices or sounds that I could detect.

I wasn't entirely disappointed with the results of my test run. I did find out that the microphone and tape recorder did an excellent job of recording background noises. That increased the possibility that I might be able to capture spirit voices or unusual sounds on tape in a truly haunted environment. After trying to record my own voice at various speeds, I settled on the second of three settings. It allowed for reasonably good recording quality without using up all the tape in just a couple of hours.

I called Margaret and told her about my idea. She thought it was terrific and told her dad. Being a stereo buff, he loved the idea and we made plans to bring my tape recorder to the warehouse. In an effort to get the best possible results, Cameron purchased some high quality recording tape and made sure there was enough footage on the reel to allow for about four hours of recording time. He also brought along an extremely high quality microphone that was better than the one I had.

We arrived at the warehouse around eleven o'clock on a Monday night and set up the tape recorder on the second floor. Although Margaret was nervous about being there, the place didn't have the same affect on me. It could have been because I was excited about the recording experiment, but I had no sense of dread at all. Normally sensitive to the presence of negative forces or emotions in a place, I felt fine.

Following the procedure outlined in the EVP article that I read, we began by turning on the tape recorder and introducing ourselves. We took turns inviting anyone else that might be present to speak to us. We heard nothing, but that was to be expected. We left the recorder on and departed. The recorder shut off automatically when the tape ended several hours later.

Cameron arranged for the warehouse manager to retrieve the tape recorder on Tuesday morning and bring it over to my house. He rang my doorbell at around ten in the morning and I couldn't wait to hear the results. Before I could get the unit fully set up and rewind the tape, the doorbell rang again and Margaret was at my door. There was no way she was going to wait to hear from me about the tape and wanted to be there when I listened to it.

The tape recorder had removable speakers and a headphone jack. Although I would have preferred to listen to the tape with headphones, Margaret's presence made that impossible. I set up the speakers and we sat quietly as the tape ran. We laughed as we heard ourselves asking anyone present on the second floor of the warehouse to speak to us. Our laughing stopped when we almost immediately heard an unearthly screech.

I hadn't expected anything like that to be on the tape so soon and it caught me off guard. I stopped the tape and replayed it several times. Margaret and I were really freaked out. There was absolutely no echo and it sounded like someone had come right up to the microphone and screeched into it. We couldn't wait to tell her dad, but didn't want to bother him at work.

We listened to the rest of the tape and heard two more odd sounds. One was a scraping noise and the other sounded like distant whispering of the type that had been reported by workers. I noted the location of all the noises on the tape counter so that it would be easy to locate them when we played the recordings again. Margaret

finally called her dad at lunchtime and told him about the recording. He couldn't believe it and was as surprised as we were.

Cameron came over to our house after work that evening and met my folks. I had already told my parents about the EVP experiment and we all listened to the screech and other weird noises together. My parents had little to say about the whole thing, but my dad suggested that I call the local Radio Shack store and ask them about the screech. He felt it might be some sort of recoding anomaly and thought that the guys at Radio Shack would know for sure.

I knew that some low quality tapes had a tendency to make a squealing noise during playback, but we were using high quality tape. I had heard those kinds of playback squeals before and this was something completely different. Just to be sure, I called Radio Shack the next day and asked them about the screeching noise. They asked me to bring in the equipment and tape, so my mother drove me over to the Radio Shack store with the tape recorder, the tape and Cameron's microphone.

I didn't tell that guys at Radio Shack much about the tape and said nothing about our EVP experiment. I simply played the screeching noise which I had cued up and asked them what they thought about it. Their resident audio expert said that he thought it sounded like someone came right up to the microphone and screeched into it. The odd thing was that the tape recorder was set on automatic recording level. The screeching should have caused a slight sound drop out while the auto level adjusted itself, but didn't. It was almost as if the sound had been made in perfect sync with the machine.

In order to get the audio expert's full assessment about the machine, tape, microphone and noises, I decided to reveal what we had been up to. I thought my revelation about our EVP experiment

would bring a lot of laughter and ridicule, but the Radio Shack staff were serious about stereo equipment and I could see they were really interested in what we had recorded on the tape. I left the recorder, tape and microphone with them and said that I would come back later.

Margaret enlisted her dad to drive us back to Radio Shack that evening and we couldn't wait to hear what those guys had to say about our recoding. They told us that the noises on the tape were sounds picked up by the microphone. There was no reason to believe that the machine, tape or microphone had malfunctioned and created the sounds. I appreciated their input and they were nice enough not to charge me for the inspection of the recorder, tape and microphone.

Margaret was thrilled with the news about the recorded noises, but I was less enthusiastic. Having made my share of nonsense recordings just for fun, I still wasn't convinced that what we captured were actually spirit noises. I suggested another overnight recording session. Margaret and her dad agreed. We brought my recorder and a fresh tape to the warehouse a few nights later. I suggested we use my microphone this time just to see if it made a difference.

After starting the recording session by asking anyone present to talk to us or make their presence known, we left the recorder on and headed to a stairway located across the huge open area at the center of the second floor. Just before we reached the stairway, we saw what looked like Christmas tree lights sparkling in one corner of the open area for a few seconds. There were some boxes there, but nothing electrical or reflective that would produce that kind of an effect.

We looked around, but could not find the source of the sparkling illumination. The only lights that were constantly burning on that

floor during the day and night were two fluorescent bulbs that hung above the stairway. They provided enough light for us to get our recording experiment going, so we hadn't turned on any of the others. There was nothing reflective around them that might account for what we saw. The only other explanation might have been car and truck lights reflecting off the small windows that existed in the stairways.

The unexplained sparkling illumination was pretty weird. Initially impressed by it, I could see how it might have been caused by almost anything. That made me wonder if people, including myself, were just over-reacting to explainable phenomenon because of the all the reports and the initial story about the place being built over a graveyard. I hoped that the recordings and some more research into the building might help us to clarify these issues.

The next day the warehouse manager appeared at my house with the recorder just as before. Margaret was already there. She arrived just after eight in the morning and both of us eagerly anticipated listening to the tape. This time we had another surprise. About a half hour into the recording, we heard footsteps. They started and stopped, but sounded like they were right next to the microphone. Once again, the sounds lacked an echo. That was strange because very little was kept on the second floor of the warehouse and our voices always produced a slight echo, even on the tape.

Before going any further, Margaret called the warehouse to find out if anyone could have been in the building overnight. Her call caused the manager some concern. He said he would check and get back to her. He spoke to all the workers, checked all the floors and tested the alarm system. Nothing appeared to be disturbed or missing. All the storage areas that were supposed to be secured were locked. The emergency exit doors were also closed and

secure.

After he was sure that all was well and that no one could have possibly been in the warehouse overnight, the manager called back and gave the news to Margaret. We continued to listen to the tape and heard something else that caught our attention about another hour into the recording. A muffled hissing noise started and continued for almost two minutes before suddenly stopping. Again, it seemed like the sound was being made almost directly in front of the microphone.

The footsteps and hissing noise represented yet another mystery to be solved. When we told Margaret's dad about it, he was really concerned. He stopped by the warehouse on the way home from work that night to be sure everything was secure. Like the manager, he thought that someone might have gotten into the place. After he was sure everything was secure, he came by my house and listened to the tape again along with Margaret and my parents.

Although the sounds on the tape were fascinating, I knew that I was missing something in my search for what was actually happening at the warehouse. I asked Margaret's dad if Margaret and I could search that floor during the day for anything that might help to explain what was happening. He agreed and asked the manager and his crew to keep on eye on us while we were in the warehouse.

We arrived the next day without the tape recorder, but with lots of curiosity. The manager turned on all the second floor lights and unlocked the few storage areas that were in use. Little remained to indicate that a school ever existed on that floor, so we were left to examine what we could from the time when the place was converted to a warehouse. After a thorough search, we found nothing that might help us to understand what was happening on

that floor of the building.

By this time the manager and his crew were as involved as we were in trying to solve the mystery of the odd events that always seemed to occur on the second floor of the warehouse. One of the workers actually located a guy that was a former student of the now defunct school. He owned a small food store in the area and attended the school from 1948-1950. Margaret, her dad and I visited the store owner and asked him about his experiences there. He attended classes in the building when it was a middle school, but never heard about anything unexplained occurring on the second floor or anywhere else in the facility.

The visit to the store owner turned out to be a lucky break for us. While we were talking about the days when he attended the school, he happened to mention that he recently saw a former teacher in his store. He recognized her and they talked for a while. The teacher said that she was still teaching and worked at a school across town. Margaret's dad tracked her down thanks to the information provided by the store owner. He spoke to the teacher and convinced her to meet us at the warehouse that evening.

The teacher was very nostalgic about her time at the school. It was her first teaching job and she gladly shared her memories of the place with us as we walked through the building. Although she barely recognized the interior thanks to the warehouse conversion, she was still able to point out certain areas that were once classrooms, offices and lunchrooms. We saved the second floor for the last part of our building walk thru and asked her if she recalled anything about that area.

The teacher told us that the second floor was made up of some classrooms, a small teachers lounge with a private toilet, two student restrooms and the physical education department which included a large gym area and shower rooms. At that point we

asked her if anything strange or traumatic had ever occurred on that floor. The answer was surprising.

The first thing that came to her mind was a scandal that occurred sometime during the 1952 school year. The teacher told us that a fourteen year old female student was raped in the girl's shower room on that floor. All she could remember about the girl was that she was a red head named Sarah. After the rape, Sarah accused a seventeen year old boy that lived in the neighborhood as her attacker.

The boy lived with his grandparents and was known as a local trouble maker. He quit school a couple of years before and had already been arrested several times for petty theft and other small time crimes by the time he was accused of the rape. The teacher remembered that a physical education instructor told her that she had caught the seventeen year old boy trying to watch girls take showers from a janitor's closet on several occasions. She reported the incidents to the police, but little was done about it.

Sarah was able to identify her attacker because she was one of the students that alerted the physical education teacher to his presence in the janitor's closet on at least one occasion. After the attack, she told the police that he was always hanging around the place and trying to pick up girls. He looked much younger than his actual age, so most of the girls he targeted thought he was just another student at the school.

After he was convicted of the rape, the boy was sent to an adult jail. Sarah continued to attend classes at the middle school, but most of the students were not overly sympathetic to her. Students that knew her said she was emotionally traumatized by the experience, the boy's trial and the fact that some at school actually blamed her for the incident. At some point she just wanted to die and before the 1952 school year ended, Sarah hung herself at

home. The teacher recalled that the students and faculty reacted coldly to her death.

Sarah wasn't a wild child, but she was known as a girl that liked boys. She was often seen kissing them around school and dated several during her time there. Some of the other students started vicious rumors about her including one that stated she lost her virginity in the back of an older boy's car at the age of thirteen. Others claimed she was promiscuous and had slept with teachers, as well as students.

Despite the fact that she wasn't to blame for the crime, some students listened to the rumors and came to believe that Sarah hadn't been raped. They were convinced that she was simply caught in the act of having sex with an older boy that happened to be at her school when they did it. They figured that she made him pay for her embarrassment and exposure as a slut by making up the whole rape story. Most of the guys and some of the girls at school blamed her for sending an innocent guy to prison just to save what was left of her reputation.

The story about Sarah changed everything. In terms of ghostly activity, it fitted nicely into the sounds we recorded on the tape and explained why the unexplained events had been limited to the second floor of the warehouse. However, it didn't explain the sighting of the group of people that appeared to be stuck together or some of the other sounds and unusual activity that took place there. I began to consider the possibility that there were several paranormal events from different situations intersecting on the second floor. It that were true and for what ever reason, it would be difficult to deal with them all.

I was certain that one possible solution to the paranormal problems at the warehouse would be a religious intervention of some kind and asked Margaret about the family's religious beliefs. They

attended an Episcopal Church. Margaret's dad contacted their Pastor and he agreed to pray for the family, as well as bless the building. The Pastor and several Church Deacons performed a short religious ceremony on the second floor of the warehouse a short time later. Everyone hoped that would end all the weirdness.

I developed a personal interest in the Bible after a number of the books I read about UFOs and the paranormal referenced that book. I could see that apart from personal salvation and the obvious doctrinal teachings, the Bible was an important literary work in terms of understanding and interpreting historical and religious views of the supernatural. It became clear to me that there was no way to look at UFOs and the paranormal without reading it.

I was brought up as a Lutheran and attended a local Missouri Synod Lutheran Church with my parents in New York and just after we first arrived in Florida. That church seemed a bit too steeped in religious formality for my taste and did nothing to help me better understand the Bible, so I stopped attending and looked for something better. I visited other churches and various youth ministries until I settled on a few that taught born again Christianity. I liked their belief system and found a wealth of resources that helped me learn more about the Bible.

One of the UFO researchers I heard on the old Long John Nebel radio show was a guy named Robert Barry. He was involved with a number of credible UFO investigative organizations including his own 20th Century U.F.O. Research Investigation Center. Barry had worked on several high profile cases and had an excellent reputation within the paranormal research community. I began corresponding with him because he also had a background in born again Christianity.

Robert Barry was very helpful to me. He taught me how to balance

my religious beliefs with my interest in the paranormal without allowing either one to suffer. As I got to know him better over the years, I was pleased to see that he shared my basic investigative philosophy of remaining objective and existing somewhere between all the skeptics and true believers. He sold many of the videos I produced over the years while he was hosting a satellite TV show out of Pennsylvania called E.T. Monitor.
After the religious intervention by the Episcopal Pastor and Deacons, the paranormal activity at the warehouse settled down, but didn't stop. We had several other clergy members from different faiths come and perform similar ceremonies, but strange things still occasionally happened on the second floor. Cold spots were reported, boxes were found out of place, furniture was moved around, electrical problems persisted and soft whispering sounds were still heard every so often.

The experience of investigating the warehouse activity taught me a lot and I was truly astonished at the success we had with the EVP experiments. However, I also discovered how important if was to develop a working knowledge of all areas of the paranormal and anything that could be related to it. A basic knowledge of what constituted paranormal activity and the approach that different societies and religions took to it were essentials.

I was on my own again after Margaret and Toby started summer school just a few weeks after we had reconnected. We spoke on the phone a lot, but they were too busy trying to pass those classes to stop by and see me. I understood having had to spend part of one summer doing the same thing while I still lived on Long Island. Hoping to spend more time with Mary Ann, I was glad when her dad's phone gal returned to work. I was almost immediately back in the doldrums after discovering that her folks were sending her away to summer camp. Apparently, this was a

yearly ritual which they hoped would give her a healthy respect for the great outdoors.

Having taken the warehouse case as far as I could as a young teen and without any friends to hang around with, I decided that it was time to enjoy the often unappreciated tourist traps and attractions that existed in our area. Fortunately, we lived just a block off Central Avenue and that meant easy access to a bus stop. The buses in that area were plentiful, inexpensive to ride, air conditioned and had routes that interconnected to get you almost anywhere you wanted to go. I decided to make St Petersburg Beach my first stop.

I went to the Aquatarium, a privately owned salt water aquarium attraction that featured shows with sea lions, porpoises and pilot whales. Next I visited Tassaud's London Wax Museum. I loved that place! They had a Chamber of Horrors with movie monsters and villains that looked absolutely real. After checking out a few more places on the beach over several days, I decided to visit downtown St Petersburg.

Because St Petersburg is located on a peninsula, heading downtown meant eventually running into Tampa Bay. There were museums, attractions, a marina and a huge pier loaded with things to do. However, during the bus ride downtown, I kept seeing billboards for a place called Webb's City. The billboard ads called it "the world's most unusual drug store." I just had to get off the bus and check that place out.

Webb's City was a massive building with several floors and lots of escalators. It was owned by innovator and entrepreneur, James "Doc" Webb. Webb invented the 'ten items or less' check out lane and had all kinds of gimmicks in his huge store. These included live animal acts, mermaids and acrobats. The dancing chickens, performing chimps and baseball playing ducks made it seem like a

crazy house, but as a young teen I thought it was all very cool. I spent several hours there.

I finally got back on the bus and arrived at the main terminal downtown. It was a really amazing area with lots of stores, hotels, restaurants, an open air post office, local landmarks and a mix of architectural styles that made me almost dizzy. Tourists mixed with locals and the place was much busier than I thought it would be. Rather than wait for another bus, I decided to walk the rest of the way down to the water and enjoy the sights. Depending on where I walked, downtown St Pete looked like New York City, New Orleans or some European metropolis.

When I reached the waterfront, it was fabulous. The pier jutted straight out into Tampa Bay and there were things to do everywhere. I visited an historic museum, art museum and even a replica of The Bounty made for the film Mutiny on the Bounty with Marlon Brando. That ship and exhibit later became a part of one of my most interesting paranormal investigations.

The downtown area turned out to be a place that provided me with lots to do and I burned up more than a few of my summer vacation days visiting there. One immediate benefit to heading downtown on a regular basis was visiting the municipal bus terminal. You could get to almost anyplace you wanted to go by learning about all the available bus routes. I did just that and made good use of public transportation, but I also continued working for The Colonel and had to make time for him.

In addition to my lawn duties, I began helping The Colonel and his wife with shopping and various errands. We went to the store every couple of days and I learned the location of all the big shopping areas and malls. The Colonel also took me around to see some of his favorite places. On of those was Fort Desoto Park near St Petersburg Beach. It was an historic fort surrounded by

wonderful picnic areas and pristine beaches.

The fort was built in the late 1890's after the Spanish-American War and was designed to protect that area of the west coast from sea assault. Somewhat impractical and poorly positioned from the beginning, it was deactivated in the 1920s. Fort Dade, a sister fort located on Egmont Key was a more interesting location from a UFO and paranormal standpoint.

I discovered the existence of Fort Dade while visiting Fort Desoto Park. You can only get there by ferry or boat, so it's not the easiest place to visit. However, it's a wonderful ghost town and a fun place to go if you like walking around abandoned buildings. I guess that a desire to visit those kinds of places automatically comes with an interest in the paranormal; at least it did for me.

The Colonel arranged for us to visit Fort Dade with a friend that owned a power boat. When we got there, the place was amazing. There was a huge fort complex, a lighthouse and lots of old buildings to explore. A long road made of red brick lead to a small town where several hundred people once lived. Most of the buildings were decaying, but it was still easy to get a feel for the way the place must have been in its heyday.

A lighthouse originally completed in the late 1850s was the most visually interesting structure on the key, but not the most haunted. That honor falls to the deserted town and surrounding area where ghostly legends abound. One involved a former Seminole Indian leader that was captured during a war with the Seminole tribe when the key was used as a temporary prison. Scheduled to be transported to a facility in Arkansas, he ingested ground up glass and lay down on the beach to die. Within two hours he was dead, but not forgotten. Several boaters claim to have seen the silhouette of ghostly figures resembling Seminole Indians while fishing just off the key at night.

With a history of close to a hundred years of regular use in the 1800s, Egmont Key and Fort Dade saw enough action to scare up a few ghosts. While we were visiting the fort The Colonel's friend told us about the regular sighting of ghostly troops in and around the area. Some may have been killed during the Seminole wars or died of disease. Fort Dade wasn't an easy place to be stationed. It was very hot and humid in summer, and isolated enough to make it difficult to supply and maintain.

Ghost lights were another phenomenon often observed on the shores of Egmont Key at night and throughout the area around Fort Dade, Fort Desoto and the Sunshine Skyway Bridge. I recall standing on sections of the old Sunshine Skyway before it was demolished and seeing lights on the water. I always thought they were the running lights of shrimp boats and pleasure craft, but now I wonder if they also could have been something else. I know that a lot of boaters also reported lights under the water, but again, the thought was that these were lanterns used by fisherman to attract shrimp and fish.

The Sunshine Skyway Bridge connects the St Petersburg and Sarasota areas. Both places are plentiful with bizarre stories. One of the first I heard about after moving there concerned the fog. Anyone who has ever driven through the fog in that area could easily understand why it would inspire supernatural tales. I can't remember ever seeing fog that thick.

Legend has it that people and vehicles vanished into the fog between midnight and three o'clock in the morning. I had a neighbor that lived across the back alleyway from my house in St Pete that always swore his brother was a victim of the fog. His brother had a modern pick-up truck with fog lights, but mysteriously vanished in the early morning hours of Christmas Day in 1971 while driving home from a Christmas Eve family

gathering. His truck was never found.

UFOs also figured prominently into local legends and many considered the area between Fort Desoto, Fort Dade and the Sunshine Skyway Bridge to be a kind of local Bermuda Triangle. Pleasure boaters and fisherman reported disc shaped objects landing on, hovering over and diving into the water. Others said they had hours of missing time or that their boat engines stopped working. Even aircrafts had problems in that area that may have been related to UFOs.

A few years after I moved to Florida, a number of small aircraft started crashing into Tampa Bay. With a major airport located nearby in Tampa and smaller airfields spread throughout the area this was bound to happen, but it seemed that there were an awful lot of crashes involving small aircraft and I wondered why. I began to connect the dots when several local TV stations started reported UFO sightings during their news reports on a regular basis.

Most of the local newspapers in Tampa, St Pete and Sarasota ignored these kinds of stories, but TV news reporters wanted the kind of content that made viewers come back and the UFOs fit that bill. A documentary film about strange events in the Bermuda Triangle involving UFOs and other unexplained phenomenon had recently been released in theaters and that encouraged many TV news reports in Florida to begin covering the UFO topic more often.

Whenever UFO sightings in the area increased, so did incidents of small plane crashes. Many of these crashes were caused by mechanical failure and I wondered if UFOs might have contributed to those failures. The fact that UFOs were seen simultaneously by drivers and pedestrians on land, boaters on the water and pilots in the sky not only added to the credibility of the sightings, but the possibility that these objects interacted with people and machines

according to their own agendas.

My interest in local UFO activity made me decide that it was time to visit the main branch of the St Petersburg Public Library to do some more research. It was easily accessible by bus and turned out to be a wonderful facility. They had all a huge collection of books, periodicals, films and recordings. Listening booths were available so that anyone wanting to listen to a record album could do so. There were all kinds of programs for people of all ages, film festivals, exhibits, live music concerts on the weekends and lots more to do.

The news media's overall hesitation to cover UFO stories in print curtailed my ability to turn up much in the way of information about local sightings over the years, but the library's collection of books on the subject and their huge selection of periodicals made the trip there well worthwhile. Apart from the paranormal, my growing interest in current events was always satisfied in the pages of all the magazines available to anyone that visited that wonderful facility.

My parents were really good about letting me head out on my own and travel around town using the local bus system. I wasn't perfect, but I was a decent kid that tended to stay out of trouble and they trusted me for that reason. I didn't smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs and my parents knew that. I felt alienated by the counterculture of the 1960s and had no attraction to that lifestyle after watching so many of my peers die from drug overdoses and alcohol use.

As far as rebellion goes, I didn't feel a strong need to rebel against anything. My folks were fair and lead by example. They didn't browbeat me into philosophical, political or behavioral submission and I considered most of the rebellion I saw to be superficial anyway. The causes may or may not have been just, but the results

were always going to be the same. My father's dealings with the government and military taught me that the will of the people had long been replaced by a ruling elite that knew how to manipulate everyone.

America has a wonderful system of government, but its success depends on truth and that has been an endangered species for as long as I have been alive. It has been replaced by well scripted actions and deceptions created to serve power hungry elitists with their own agendas. Perhaps that's why I have always tried not to be a Kool Aid drinker. Even when it comes to my paranormal research, I try to keep things in perspective, remaining objective and tolerant when it comes to all points of view.

My lack of enthusiasm for drugs, disinterest in rebellion and inability to get excited about the latest cause of the moment increasingly limited my social opportunities among kids my own age. Many of them insisted on instantly categorizing and labeling their peers. Those that didn't were the ones I usually ended up befriending. Apart from those social relationships, I also spent a lot of time with adults because I didn't view most of them as the enemy.

My mother used to say, "Listen and learn." It wasn't just a catch phrase for her, but a sincere belief that also became a favorite pastime of my own. I became a good listener and people sensed that. I can't tell you how many conversations I had in my travels around St Pete. I leaned a lot of things from retirees who already faced the challenges that stood before me. It was a valuable education that came in handy in so many ways. One of them was paranormal research.

There were always a few paranormal seminars and events going on in my area and thanks to the pipeline of information I created among older people, I rarely missed any. These became an

excellent way to learn more about the subjects that interested me. They were also a lesson in presentation. By the time I started presenting my own seminars, I already had a good idea of what interested people and what didn't.

Mary Ann finally returned from camp and we started hanging out together. We made daily trips to a small strip mall with a few stores a couple of blocks away. I had extra cash thanks to my lawn cutting duties with The Colonel and some odd jobs I did for a few of his friends. Mary Ann also had cash to spend after her dad paid her for manning the phones in his office. She also received an allowance from her folks for taking care of their house.

After hearing tales about my adventures traveling throughout the area by bus, Mary Ann wanted to join me. That necessitated a dinner invitation from her folks so that they could get to know me better. I spent an enjoyable evening with Mary Ann and her folks. Although I avoided talking about my interest in the paranormal, I did explain how much I liked traveling around St Pete by bus and explained why I thought their daughter would enjoy the experience as well.

With her parent's permission and The Colonel's blessing, Mary Ann was allowed to join me on many of my bus travels around St Pete. When we weren't going shopping, to the movies, the beach or local attractions, the library became one of our favorite hang-outs. Mary Ann and I spent many hours that summer sitting outside in a library area reserved for reading or conversation and talked about our mutual and individual interests.

After sharing a few of my UFO and ghost stories, I discovered that Mary Ann also had an interest in the paranormal. She asked if I could recommend any good books about ghosts and I dug up several excellent titles from the library collection that I thought she would enjoy. These included some by Hans Holzer, my favorite

author on the subject of Ghosts.

I tried to keep things light as far as conversation about the paranormal went, but I sensed that Mary Ann might have had some experiences of her own to share with me. Instead of pushing that point, I deflected it by keeping our conversation and activities as eclectic as possible. I was concerned about the possible repercussions I might face from her folks or The Colonel if our talks lead her to believe that she was having some kind of paranormal encounters.

Despite all the other things we did, our conversations always seemed to come back to the paranormal. As much as that troubled me, I saw that it was inevitable. Sometimes those conversations even attracted the interest of others. When Mary Ann and I discussed topics involving the paranormal or unexplained in the outside sitting area at the library, people would occasionally hear us and come over to join our conversation. That's how we met Ruth. She was an elderly woman and a member of the Spiritualist Church.

Ruth attended a small Spiritualist Church in Gulfport. It was a beautiful old building that seated several hundred comfortably. Many of the original congregation members had passed on and there weren't very many new converts, so folks like Ruth tended to invite people with an interest in ghosts to their services. That included us. She asked if we would like to attend one of their services. Our parents allowed us to go and we had an amazing time. Among the roughly fifty people that attended services there on a regular basis, several were gifted Mediums.

The thing I enjoyed most about Ruth's Church was the spirit messages. Mediums delivered messages to the living from those that passed on. I didn't get any, but Mary Ann was thrilled when one of the members conducting the service had a message for her

from a long dead relative. Although my own religious beliefs were and remain more traditional, I found the experience fascinating and believe it's essential to keep on open mind about such things.

Mary Ann and I were spending a lot of time together and I became a bit concerned about it. I enjoyed being with her, but I wasn't ready for a girlfriend and hoped that she didn't think of me as anything more than a friend. Besides, I knew that her parents and The Colonel wouldn't like it one bit. They were very protective, somewhat old fashioned and thought that she was far too young to date anyone.

I also worried about keeping Mary Ann from hanging out with any girl friends she might have. After I brought up the matter with her, Mary Ann told me that she really didn't have many friends. She wasn't born in Florida. Her parents moved there from New Jersey to start their business after the Colonel retired. He noticed how many people in the area needed home improvement work done and passed that information on to his son.

With an economic recession plaguing the northeast, Mary Ann's folks took the plunge and opened their business in Florida. It turned out to be a good business decision, but left Mary Ann feeling alienated from her peer group. She didn't have much in common with the other young teen girls living in our area. Most of them loved Country Music and she didn't care for it. They wore dresses and she preferred jeans. They hung around boys all the time trying to get dates and she liked going to the mall. It was a culture clash that affected me as much as it did her.

After we talked about it, Mary Ann made it clear that I wasn't keeping her from anything. I could tell that she looked at me as a friend and I was fine with that. Despite our 'clearing the air' conversation, I still had a feeling that there was more going on with Mary Ann than I knew. I also felt that she was getting to the

point where she was ready to share that information with me. That was fine as long as it didn't create problems between us, our parents or The Colonel. My folks hated neighbor problems and never really had any. I wasn't going to be the first person in our family to create any.

During our next trip to the library I introduced Mary Ann to a book by John G. Fuller, another one of my favorite paranormal authors. Interrupted Journey was a book he wrote about the Betty and Barney Hill alien kidnapping case. The Hills were heading back to New England after a vacation in Canada in 1961 when the incident began. During the trip home along Route 3, they saw a star that seemed to be following them.

After the Hills stopped so that Betty could walk their dog, Barney used some binoculars he had in the car to get a better look at the star. Their journey continued until they arrived at an isolated spot near Indian Head. Barney suddenly stopped the car and got out without much explanation. Betty begged for him to get back in, but he didn't. At that point, the couple discovered that the star was actually an alien spacecraft with occupants aboard.

Betty and Barney were taken into the craft and examined by the occupants. After several hours, they were returned to their vehicle with virtually no memory of what happened to them. Eventually realizing that their trip home took much longer than it should have, the Hills became concerned about strange marks on their car where paint had been removed down to the bare metal. Those areas were magnetized as well. Barney had scuff marks on his shoes which made it appear that he had been dragged around while still wearing them.

The more they thought about the star that followed them, the more they were convinced it was a UFO. They reported the object they saw to Peace Air Force Base and a national UFO organization.

They were eventually referred to Dr Benjamin Simon, a Boston Psychiatrist. He placed them under hypnosis and helped them remember their alien abduction experiences. Among the amazing things that came out of that case was Betty's description of an amniocentesis she received while on board. The type she received was a medical procedure that hadn't yet been fully developed or placed into use at that time.

As I told her the story of the Hills, I could see that Mary Ann was getting upset. Finally, she broke down and told me about some experiences she was having. The strange events that became a part of her life began when she was eight years old and still living in New Jersey. Mary Ann recalled waking up in a state which she described as "half asleep, half awake" with the feeling that someone was staring at her.

After getting up out of bed, she started walking out of her bedroom to the bathroom. While still in the hallway, she was suddenly confronted by her Grandmother Jane from her mother's side of the family. Jane died a few years before this happened and Mary Ann didn't know what to think or do. Jane didn't say anything, but motioned her back to the bedroom. Mary Ann followed her and sat down on the bed. Jane began to tell her things that she didn't understand and couldn't recall later.

Jane appeared to her a few more times, then those visitations stopped and other strange events began. By the time she was ten years of age, Mary Ann developed a fear of standing out under the night sky. She first noticed it when she became briefly separated from her parents after a Fourth of July fireworks display. The fireworks were held at a large park near their home in Jersey.

Mary Ann stood near the family car waiting for her folks to catch up to her and started looking up at the nighttime sky. Within seconds, she became absolutely terrified and remained so until her

parents arrived. It wasn't until after she was in the car that Mary Ann regained her composure. She couldn't understand what happened, but even stranger events were yet to come.

After the nighttime sky incident, Mary Ann began to have trouble sleeping through the night. She fell asleep easy enough, but woke up between one o'clock and three o'clock in the morning almost every night with a feeling of intense fear. Sometimes she woke up in her bed, while other times she found herself standing alone in the living room or kitchen.

The fear lead to incidents of bedwetting. When she finally fell asleep, Mary Ann didn't want to wake up again and fought the urge to get up to use the bathroom. Those embarrassing occurrences brought the sleep problems to her parent's attention. She didn't tell them anything about seeing her dead grandmother or that she was occasionally waking up in other parts of the house.

Mary Ann's parents took her to the doctor and got some pills to help resolve the bedwetting problem. The pills worked and the bedwetting stopped after a short period of time. Her sleep habits also began to improve and Mary Ann hoped that all of these weird incidents were coming to an end. But just when everything seemed to be returning to normal, she began waking up again in the middle of the night.

After a few nights of problem sleep, Mary Ann woke up horrified to see five or six little creatures wandering around her room. She described them as "little monkeys" that moved in all directions and seemed to melt in and out of the walls. After several months, the monkeys morphed into little people. They reminded her of trolls or leprechauns.

Mary Ann's parents were both Irish and she recalled how frightened she was on one Saint Patrick's Day when her mom gave her little leprechaun statues to display in her room. She hid them in

the closet and threw them out at a later time. Even seeing a leprechaun decoration on someone's door or at the mall around St Patrick's Day reminded her of the little men and became quite upsetting.

Mary Ann hoped that the move from New Jersey to Florida would put an end to the bizarre experiences, but they continued. Based on what she remembered, and unlike the little monkeys which seemed to appear in her room once or twice a week, the little people visited her infrequently. She was certain that there had been just five or six incidents a year. When I asked about her most recent, she said that none had occurred in the past three months.

Although infrequent, the incidents became more terrifying a few weeks after she turned thirteen years of age. At that point, one of the little people started coming up and speaking to her. Despite her best efforts, Mary Ann couldn't remember what the little being said or exactly how it looked. It reminded her of the incidents with her Grandmother Jane. After the creature got in her face, her memory went blank. She assumed that she went back to sleep or was just too scared to remember anything that happened next.

Mary Ann originally assumed that everything happening to her had to do with ghosts, but our visit to Ruth's Church and a lack of any spirit messages directly related to her visitations dispelled that theory. After hearing some of Betty and Barney Hill's story, she wondered if what she was experiencing had more to do with aliens than spirits. It was confusing for both of us and I wasn't entirely sure how to handle it.

After we returned from the library, Mary Ann invited me into her house. Her parents allowed her to bring friends over when they weren't home, but I was certain they preferred them to be female. Despite some reservations, I accepted the invitation and we talked more about her experiences over cold glasses of iced tea.

Because some of the strange events took place in her room, she wanted me to see it. I took the plunge and looked around her room. It didn't seem out of the ordinary and was typical of most any young teen girl's room. There were some teen idol posters, lots of make up, a record player, radio and books. I probably wouldn't have noticed anything else except for a fly that buzzed in past our heads.

The air conditioning was on with all the doors and windows closed, so that only way to rid us of the fly was to open a window. I was amazed at how easily her window opened. Our house was almost identical to hers and had the same type of windows. They were glass surrounded by metal, poorly insulated and had to be cranked open. The crank mechanism was poorly designed and it required a lot of effort to open a window.

I asked her if her windows had always been that easy to crank open and she told me they were much harder to crank when she first moved in. If that wasn't odd enough, there were strange little scratches on some of the window glass and walls. I noticed them when I got close to the windows and tried cranking them myself. It was as if someone with three or four fingers had accidentally scratched those surfaces.

I didn't say anything about the scratches and asked Mary Ann if she recalled how many fingers the little people had on each hand? She told me that she really hadn't given it much thought and reminded me that she couldn‘t remember much about their appearance. After thinking about it for a while, she said there were might have been four.

I went home that day more than a bit bewildered. This was all new ground to me. I read about people that claimed to have been kidnapped by aliens, but never met one. Most of the stories I heard

on Long Island involved UFO sightings and close encounters with physical evidence. People just didn't talk openly about their alien abduction experiences in those days and it wasn't the kind of thing that first responders tended to get called about.

Mary Ann came over to my house the next day just before lunch and I invited her to stay for a sandwich. We began talking about her experiences again and I asked if she noticed any unusual marks on her body after the visitations. She told me about red blotches that appeared on her skin.

Mary Ann had very fair skin. Any kind of a skin irritation would be noticed right away. Her account of the red blotches reminded me of the Nassau County Police Officer and the skin eruptions he experienced after the strange light appeared over his car. Like his, her blotches became itchy for a brief time, then cleared up as quickly as they appeared.

At some point in our conversation, I asked Mary Ann if she had ever seen a UFO. The question caught her off guard. She told me she wasn't sure. She didn't remember seeing flying saucers or spaceships in the sky, but was surprised at how much the question upset her. She did recall seeing strange lights on a few occasions.

Her family visited the Pine Barrons in New Jersey a few times and she remembered seeing lights just above the trees. Her father said they were probably swamp gas or some kind of pollution generated by all the gas and chemical storage facilities in Jersey. After giving it more thought, they might have been something else. I told her that if she remembered more, she should write it down and tell me about it later.

During our lunchtime talk, I found out that Mary Ann was going to be staying at her uncle's house in New Jersey for about a week and half. She was attending some kind of family gathering that her

parents couldn't participate in. I was glad to hear that news. It would give me some time to think about all she told me and find ways to keep from constantly discussing her bizarre experiences.

Our conversations about her encounters were getting too intimate. I knew that one of us would eventually say something to our parents or The Colonel about what was happening in her life. Whether by accident or on purpose, that kind of revelation would be a disaster and create problems for both families.

While Mary Ann was gone, I visited some more local attractions including a miniature railroad museum and a restored nineteenth century farm off of 34th Street South. I wanted to take a step back from the paranormal for a while. Unfortunately, an opportunity came up which thrust me right back into the world I was trying to hide from.

A brief article in a magazine that I received announced a UFO essay contest for persons sixteen years old and younger. It was being sponsored by a now defunct tabloid publication that was trying to attract younger readers. The prize was a brand new cassette recorder, cassette tapes, microphone and other accessories. Cassette recorders were still a somewhat new technology in those days and I wanted to get my hands on a good one.

I decided to take a shot at entering the essay contest. I hoped to make up for my inexperience in the area of writing with a hot topic. I looked through most of the UFO and paranormal publications lying around my room and those available at the library. None were covering some events that may have occurred between U.S. Astronauts and UFOs, so I had my topic!

During the Apollo 11 mission that landed the first man on the moon, I used my father's reel to reel tape recorder to record the transmissions and NASA commentaries that were broadcast live

over a New York radio station. The broadcast lasted for the duration of the mission. Because it occurred in July, I was on summer vacation from school and had lots of time to listen to the tapes. I played them while I was doing other things.

Even though I recorded the broadcast at slow speed, the sound quality wasn't bad. At one point, the astronauts started talking about some strange noises they were hearing over their radio. The noises sounded almost like a gibberish language of sorts. It was obviously upsetting to the astronauts and you could hear the tension in their voices and in the responses from mission control.

In an effort to cover up the weird noises, the astronauts began playing music on a cassette player they had with them. The music blared over everything else and that wasn't the only bizarre thing that occurred during that mission. Armstrong, Aldrin and Conrad said things during their mission that made no sense unless they were talking about seeing and experiencing phenomenon that was out of the ordinary. I took note of all those things and where they occurred on the footage meter of each reel.

After going back over the recordings that I made during the Apollo 11 mission, I found the segments I needed and began writing the essay. I must have written it over ten times before I took it to my mother. She was the expert when it came to making any corrections, but had some disparaging remarks for me. She asked me if I copied the essay from someone else's work. I assured her that I hadn't.

That was my curse. People always underestimated me. They assumed that because I was young, I was stupid or didn't have enough brains to write a cohesive essay or article about anything. I invited my mother to check over my notes and listen to the recordings which she did. She apologized afterward and made any necessary corrections.

I typed up the essay, had my mother check it again and mailed it in. Sometime later I was shocked to receive a letter saying that I won the contest! I was thrilled and showed it to my parents. They congratulated me and we all looked forward to receiving a copy of the tabloid with my essay published in it.

When the publication arrived, I read it over and over again. I couldn‘t believe that something I wrote appeared in print. Although my essay was buried somewhere in the back of the publication, it was still an honor for me to have won the contest and I was very happy. My prize arrived around the same time. I was thrilled with that cassette recorder and made good use of it.

The essay contest set off several bizarre events in my life. Even after burying it in their back pages, the tabloid sent out press releases about the contest and the winning essay. My guess is that they received a bigger response to my subject matter than they initially expected. One of their representatives actually called me to announce that a local newspaper in my area wanted to do an article about my essay.

That was my first experience with The St Petersburg Times. They sent a reporter and photographer to our house. I played some of the recordings that I used to write the article and the reporter was thrilled. He wrote a nice piece about me which appeared in a Sunday edition of their newspaper, along with my photo. I enjoyed the whole thing and figured that my brush with fame was over. I was wrong.

Less than two weeks after she left, Mary Ann was home. She rang my door bell around midmorning and I invited her in. We caught up on things and I told her about the essay contest. At that point, I hadn’t won yet. I showed her my essay and she took the time to read it while I made us a snack. I guess that my pride got the best

of me and I was off to a bad start when it came to moving our conversations and activities away from the paranormal. I tried to make up for it the next day.

My parents recently purchased a used speedboat. It was an eighteen foot, wooden craft with an old Mercury outboard engine. After having the boat repainted and the engine overhauled, my father encouraged me to learn how to pilot it. I took and passed a boating safety course and invited Mary Ann to go boating with me the day after she returned from her uncle's house.

After getting permission from my parents to use the speedboat the next day, we asked Mary Ann's folks if she could join me. Our parents talked about it over the phone and agreed she could go as long as we stayed in the boating channels, away from the Gulf of Mexico and didn't go any further than the resort where my father worked on the bay side.

The next morning we packed some sandwiches and soda in an ice chest, filled a few gallon containers with fresh water and took a cab to the marina where my parents kept the boat. After loading our supplies on board and gassing up at the marina store, we headed out. It was a beautiful day and I could see we were going to have a wonderful time.

Our first stop was a mini-island that was located between South Pasadena and St Pete Beach. It served as a base for part of a low bridge that connected the two areas. It was posted land, but boaters with smaller crafts like ours were allowed to stop there. As long as we didn't start any fires on the beach and took our garbage with us when we left, we were welcome to enjoy the small island and its wonderful beach.

We had a nice lunch on the beach and took a brief walk to stretch our legs. While we were walking, Mary Ann asked me if there

were many UFO sightings by boaters. Although I was trying to avoid the topic, I told her about an article that I read in1969. It appeared in Rudder, a popular boating magazine of the day. The article was about close encounters between boaters and UFOs.

Not surprisingly, the author singled out the waters off of Long Island as a location where a number of boating enthusiasts had encountered UFOs. A few photos were taken and included in the article along with a stern warning: If you encounter a UFO while pleasure boating, don't try to get closer to it. Those that do might experience mechanical problems and may not be able to restart their engines.

I tried to lighten the moment by suggesting that we avoid any contact with UFOs during our day of boating. Mary Ann laughed and said that she had her camera along just in case we did. Although it was meant as a joke, her comments made me think. I needed to start carrying a camera with me everywhere. I would feel like an idiot if a UFO appeared and I couldn't take a photograph.

After lunch, we went over the pick up my friends Toby and Margaret at a boat dock in South Pasadena. They finally finished summer school and were ready to start hanging out with me again. I spoke with Margaret the night before and asked her not to bring up anything about the warehouse in our conversations the next day. I thought it might upset Mary Ann and I had probably done enough of that already. Margaret understood and agreed.

After picking up them up, we boated over to the resort where my father worked. There was a small marina there and he was allowed to tie up his boat at any one of several empty slips that were available for rental. The marina was directly behind a shopping center that was part of the resort. It was a fabulous place and lots of fun to visit.

We tied up the boat and headed to the hotel where my father worked. I let him know that we arrived safely and he directed us to some changing rooms that hotel guests used for the pools and beach. We changed into our bathing suits and hit the beach. The people at the resort were always nice to us. They gave us beach towels and a sun umbrella to use.

St Pete Beach was a terrific place to go swimming. The Gulf of Mexico water was warm and clean. On that day it was also calm. Days like that one reminded me how normal life could be when I wasn't thinking about the paranormal. After about an hour the sun got to us, so we changed back into our clothes and headed over to the shopping center for some ice cream. We were enjoying our ice cold treat at a covered sitting area when Toby noticed the marquee on the small movie theater at the other end of the shopping center.

"What the heck is The Legend of Boggy Creek about?" he asked.

Times like this were proof that fate hated me. I was doing all I could to enjoy a nice day with some friends and the paranormal was back up in my face again. I explained that the film was about Bigfoot and told them that I went to see the movie earlier that summer. It was a campy film based on some Bigfoot encounters that took place in Arkansas years before.

"What do you think about Bigfoot?" Toby asked.

I really felt like smashing Toby in the face! Instead, I told him and the others what I read about the creatures. I explained that they have been seen in many places around the world and called by a number of different names. In Florida and Georgia, the creatures were known as Skunk Apes because of the allegedly horrendous odor they gave off. In others people called these creatures Yeti, Bigfoot, Sasquatch, the Abominable Snowman and so on.

By the time we finished talking about Bigfoot, Toby convinced

Mary Ann and Margaret that it would be fun to go and see the movie. There was a matinee that started in forty-five minutes and the air cold air in the theater was appealing on a hot day. I ran across the street to tell my dad what we were doing and he came up with some free passes for us to see the movie.

The theater was small, but the screen was big and I thought Mary Ann was going to jump into my lap each time the Bigfoot attacked someone's house. Margaret was more amused than anything else and laughed a lot during the film. Toby just sat there. I think he was as freaked out as Mary Ann. The movie may have been campy, but it sure scared the crap out of them!

After the film ended, we went back to the boat to head home. Thirty minutes later, we arrived at the marina where my parents stored our boat. Toby and Margaret cleaned out the boat while Mary Ann and I went over to the office to call a cab. The cab arrived and took us all back to my house.

We had a great time that day. Toby and Margaret stayed long enough for some iced tea, and then went home. I was hoping that Mary Ann would also go home, but she wanted to stay and talk for a while. We sat on the porch in front of my house and quietly conversed. As I feared, the topic of her experiences came up again.

"Aren't you going to ask me what happened at my uncle's house?" she asked.

I guessed that she and her relatives talked, ate a lot of food and watched the older folks drink, argue and act stupid. That described most of the large family gatherings I had ever attended, but I took the plunge and asked.

Mary Ann told me that she slept fine for the first couple of days, but that something happened on the third night. She was sharing a bedroom with two other girls that slept on bunk beds, while she

slept on a cot. Mary Ann woke up sometime in the middle of the night and saw the little people roaming around the room. Although the beings seemed more interested in the other girls, one of them came right up to her as it had before.

The small being said some things to her, but once again she couldn‘t remember what was said, what it looked like or what happened after that. The next thing she remembered was waking up in the morning. The other girls were already awake. Their demeanor indicated that they either had no memory of what happened or did not wake up when the little people were in the room.

Mary Ann was again troubled more by what she couldn’t remember, than what she could. I sat puzzled by the whole situation and tried to replay the incident in my mind. I believed her, but could barely imagine how things like this could happen to people without some kind of public uproar. Mary Ann misread the confused looked on my face.

“Do you think I’m crazy?” she asked.

I assured Mary Ann that I didn’t think she was crazy. I was just having trouble grasping all that happened to her. I have always approached things from a logical point of view and what was happening to her really blew my mind. Suppose she had some kind of psychological problems or just an over active imagination?

Mary Ann said she had faith in me and that I was the first person she met that she felt comfortable talking with about her experiences. I thanked her for telling me that and said I would try to help. Although I could see this would end up being a losing situation for me no matter what I did, I had to stick by her for the time being and see what developed.

Summer flew by and it was time to return to school. I couldn’t

believe that I was starting high school. Boca Ciega was a short bike ride from my house. It wasn't one of the most modern schools in Pinellas County, but it had a lot of school spirit and a terrific reputation among students and teachers. The sports teams performed consistently well and the academic standards were high. I couldn't wait to register and choose my classes.

The lunchroom doubled as a registration center for new students. I arrived early and couldn't wait for the doors to open. Sitting on a bench just outside the lunchroom in a t-shirt, shorts and sandals reminded me how nice it was to attend school in Florida. The sitting area was landscaped with palm trees and lots of tropical plants. It provided students a place to study, reflect or have quiet conversations.

Registration began and I had my class schedule for the first semester in less than two hours. When school started the following day, I couldn't believe all of the extracurricular activities that were available to students in addition to regular classes. There were all kinds of clubs, activities and events. People were trying to recruit me into these things all day long. I was dizzy be the time that day ended.

Despite a good start, the road got rough for me pretty quick. My grandparents on both sides of the family lived in New York and were constantly getting sick. With few other relatives willing to step in and help, my mother and father were forced to take turns going back and forth to New York when they weren‘t working. I had to join them on several occasions and that caused me to miss a lot of school.

Fortunately, Boca Ciega High School was a place used to transient and part-time students due to migrant workers that came through the area to pick the citrus crop. They worked with me and allowed me to complete many of my classes during that first year by

picking up and dropping off assignments during the first semester. It was academically clumsy for me, but effective.

Just before Christmas, my grandfather on my mother's side and mom's sister died unexpectedly. Needless to say, it was not a very Merry Christmas for our family that year. One or both of my folks were constantly gone from the house. I spent most of that Christmas break with Mary Ann and had my holiday dinner at The Colonel's house.

Mary Ann and her parents flew to New Jersey to celebrate New Years with her grandparents on her dad's side. Toby and Margaret were also out of town with their folks. While they were all away, I busied myself answering a growing pile of mail that resulted from the publication of my essay. I was astonished at how many people wanted to tell me about their own UFO experiences. Although the publication made it clear, I doubted that most of the people writing to me realized that I was a young teenager.

The letters opened up a new world to me. Some letters were from people that were reporting incredible UFO and other paranormal experiences that I never heard of before. Several talked about seeing creatures that were similar to those seen by Mary Ann. Other letters were from paranormal researchers and investigators that wanted me to write brief articles for their newsletters. It was all very unexpected and exhausting, but it became obvious that I couldn't hide from it.

With a need to write some articles, I considered Mary Ann's encounters as a topic. After discussing it with her, we agreed that I could write an article about her experiences as long as I left out her name and location. When the article was finished, I copied it and sent it out to the people that wanted articles for their newsletters. All of them wrote back and said they were going to use the article in their next issue.

After Christmas break, school started up again and things temporarily settled down in my life. My parents were back at work full time and I was back at school. The second semester flew by and it was time for Spring Break before I had a chance to catch my breath. The Colonel let me know that he needed some help during that time so I went over to his house on the first day of break.

The Colonel answered the door and invited me in. He seemed a bit upset about something and asked me to sit down and talk with him at the kitchen table. He opened a large envelope and took out several clippings from various publications. Looking me straight in the eye, he asked if I wrote an article about the Apollo 11 Astronauts and UFOs. I admitted that I had and certainly felt no shame in that.

He told me that someone sent him the article a short time ago along with some others they clipped from various paranormal newsletters and that he was just getting around to reading them. The others were all reprints of the article that I wrote about Mary Ann. He had no use for the subject of UFOs, but some of his friends that were also retired from the military had an interest in them and sent that kind of stuff to him all the time.

He looked me in the eye again and asked me if I wrote those articles and I said that I did. At that point the asked me if the subject of my article was his granddaughter. I felt like dying, but I was not going to lie to him. I said the article was about Mary Ann. He was very upset and I knew that explaining further wouldn't be a good idea at that point. He asked me to leave and said he would speak with my father that evening.

I called Mary Ann to warn her about the coming tumult. She was upset, but admitted that none of this was my fault. She was relieved that the whole thing would finally get out in the open. She wanted to tell her parents about her experiences for the longest

time and this development opened that door.

My father received a call from The Colonel, went over to see him and came back to speak with me. He was upset, but didn't know how to react to the whole thing. It was one of the few times in my life that I remembered him being almost speechless. Mary Ann's parents didn't speak with my father or me until the next evening. They were too busy trying to digest what their daughter told them about her experiences.

My father, The Colonel and Mary Ann's parents sat down to speak with me the following evening. I saw this was going to be a Kangaroo Court out to convict me and I wasn't going to take it without protest. They all voiced their disappointment and anger over the article. I apologized for being the cause of their misery, but wondered what damage was really done?

I pointed out that no one besides them knew the article was about Mary Ann. I also pointed out that asking for their permission to write it would have been a fool's errand. I knew they would not have approved that kind of article because none of them allegedly believed in UFOs to begin with. And if it was all a bunch of nonsense, why was everyone so upset?

I told the little gathering that what really upset them was that Mary Ann was experiencing something that they couldn't understand or explain. By writing about it, I opened the door for others experiencing the same thing to contact me and let me know what was happening in their lives. I, in turn, could share the experiences others were having with her so that she wouldn't feel isolated and alone.

My words were sound, but I could see that no one cared to listen. In the end, I agreed not to see Mary Ann again until they all gave the situation more thought. Her parents asked me not to discuss

UFOs or anything related to it with their daughter over the phone or at school. I agreed to that as well.

Mary Ann tried communicating with me through Toby and Margaret, but I explained to them that it would be unwise for me to respond. I promised our parents and The Colonel that I wouldn't speak with her and I needed to keep that promise. Although we ran into each other at school, I explained to Mary Ann that it would be better to honor our parent's wishes for the time being and I know she understood that it was the right thing to do.

After a few weeks, things started to die down. The Colonel had me back at his house cutting his lawn and doing odd jobs for his friends. Although I missed my conversations with Mary Ann, the time I spent away from her allowed me more time to get out and about. I became away of a number of paranormal incidents and began looking to them all.

During one of my many trips into downtown St Petersburg, I made yet another stop at the small historical museum that sat at the foot of The Pier. I loved looking at the Egyptian mummy they had on display, because I was able to get right up to the glass that covered the top of the display. It was closest I had ever gotten to such a rare artifact.

I was visiting the museum on a particularly slow day. The elderly woman who volunteered to sell tickets and run the small souvenir counter was catching up on her reading when a male friend walked in. He worked just up the pier at the Bounty and brought a small lunch for both of them to share. Still in awe of the Mummy and reading the story cards placed near it, I didn't really listen to the conversation between the volunteer and her friend until the word GHOST popped into my ear.

I maneuvered around the tightly packed exhibits to get a bit closer

to the souvenir counter. Feigning interest in the tourist junk, I listened to the two friends talking. It seemed that a few tourists had noticed some cold spots below deck on the Bounty replica and asked those in charge why the air conditioning in the rest of the ship's interior wasn't working?

At the same time, some workers in the gift shop expressed dismay at arriving almost daily to items thrown all over the floor or moved to locations where they didn't belong. I was intrigued and overcame my less then outgoing nature to ask the two a few questions. As it turned out, the elderly couple were impressed that a young person in those days might be interested in something other then anti-war protests.

It seems that the Bounty replica had more then a slightly odd history. The vessel was built in 1960 at a ship building firm in Nova Scotia from original Admiralty plans used for the real HMS Bounty. It took nine months to complete the ship for the 1962 film version of Mutiny on the Bounty, starring Marlon Brando and Trevor Howard. At a staggering cost of $650,000, the replica became the most expensive movie prop ever built at that time.

Like the original ship, the replica was supposed to be burned near Pitcairn Island during the last few days of filming. But an expected savior stepped in. During production, Marlon Brando gained a new respect for the plight of the real HMS Bounty Crew. He made sure that the extremes under which common seaman were forced to live during that period of history came to life on film, but didn't want it to end there.

Brando felt that if the ship were exhibited to the public, people might understand how terrible living conditions onboard had been for the Mutineers. These feelings may have come from a place deeper than just Brando's sense of social justice. He immersed himself so deeply in the part of Fletcher Christian that it became

increasingly harder to tell where Fletcher left off and Marlon began. It was almost as if the spirit of Fletcher Christian had possessed the popular actor.

Rumors flew off the set and into the tabloids that problems with the production were Brando's fault. He was described as difficult to work with and over emotional about the script. But Marlon's concern for historical accuracy took a back seat to his new demand that unless the replica was saved for posterity, he wouldn't finish the film. Despite their objections, MGM Studio executives agreed to save the replica.

Thinking it would probably be a waste of money, MGM reluctantly placed the Bounty on exhibit in Saint Petersburg, Florida. They couldn't have been more wrong. People loved the exhibit and the studio made a small fortune selling movie soundtracks, books and other items to the tourists. But not all the news was good. The replica arrived in St Pete with a history that included some very strange events.

Despite meticulous construction and for no apparent reason, the vessel would start to take on water during certain days when filming occurred. At other times, technicians recording the audio tracks on site complained of strange noises coming from the bowels of the ship. The noises weren't heard until the tapes were played at a later time and resembled muffled, incoherent voices. After the filming was completed, the weirdness continued on as the ship was prepared for public viewing.

Mannequins were placed on the ship so that costumes from the film could be exhibited and historically-accurate scenes could be recreated aboard. Those dressing and positioning the mannequins complained that they would arrive in the morning and find much of the previous days work undone with positions being shifted and clothes falling off.

It was only after the mannequins were placed in certain positions that it all stopped. Some of the workers shrugged the whole thing off as someone's idea of a practical joke or guaranteed overtime, but others were less sure. They felt that a force was at work which wanted the mannequins to be displayed a certain way, or not at all. It was if some ghostly consultant was working behind the scenes to be sure everything was as accurate as possible.

After hearing the conversation at the museum, I followed the museum volunteer's friend back to the ship and asked if anything strange other then the cold spots had recently occurred aboard the ship? He seemed upset that I still around after already answering some of my questions at the museum, but agreed to meet with me after his shift ended. Although it wasn't his name, I'll call him Chuck.

At around four o'clock in the afternoon, I met Chuck outside the gift shop. He was an older man that retired to St Pete only to find that golf, shuffleboard and the small pension he received after years of working as a book keeper wasn't making it for him. As an assistant manager and book keeper for the Bounty gift shop, he was able to sit around in air conditioning all day, fiddle with some numbers, make a nice retirement wage and visit his friend at the nearby Museum.

Before I could begin my conversation with Chuck, another guy appeared. He was a college graduate in his early twenties. Like so many others that fell victim to the ongoing recession of that day, George was unable to find real work and took the reasonably well-paying job of a tour guide on the Bounty. After some quick introductions, George told me his strange tale.

Everyone that worked at the Bounty for any period of time knew the replica's weird history. It was a right of passage, but George

had been there just a short time and was still unfamiliar with those stories when he had his first unusual experience. During the Bounty tour the guide would set off a small, rail-mounted gun (canon) to the delight of the tourists. All the new people got the duty of cleaning the gun and preparing it for use.

After being carefully instructed on how to clean, use and fire the gun, George got the cleaning duty. Arriving early in the morning, he started work on the replica weapon. During the cleaning he pointed the barrel in towards the ship. After turning away from the gun for some supplies, he turned back to find the barrel pointing away from the ship. This happened a few times so George checked the mounting hardware. Although it seemed tight enough, he walked over to the gift shop and left word for the exhibit's mechanic.

About thirty minutes later the mechanic was up on deck. George explained the situation and the mechanic said, "Oh, that's just Harry!" George asked, "Who?"

It seemed that almost every new tour guide given the duty of cleaning the gun experienced the same phenomena. It would go on for a few days, then inexplicably cease. Rather then get upset about it, the staff figured there was some prankster ghost aboard and nicknamed him Harry.

"Try asking Harry to stop," the Mechanic suggested. "He likes it when new guys call him by name."

After George asked Harry to give him a break, the gun never again turned by itself while he was cleaning it. He thought that the whole thing was a prank on the new guy arranged by the other workers, but went along with it. The next event changed his mind.

Tour guides dressed in period costumes from the time that the famous mutiny took place. The week before I met him and Chuck,

George was working around midday when it came time for him to take a break. As he prepared to go over to the gift shop, he saw a very scruffy looking man wearing a costume like his and heading down into lower deck area.

George was surprised at the man's appearance, because the costume seemed as dirty as the guy himself. He followed the man and walked down the steps into the bowels of the ship, but found no one there. Had he imagined it all? The smell of sweat and body odor filled the air and George was sure the man must have been real. Despite searching every inch of the ship, he found no one and there was no way to leave the ship from the lower deck.

Later the same day some tourists reported cold spots in the same place where the unkept man was seen. Employees also noticed the cold spots on previous occasions, but in different areas. While all that craziness was going on aboard the bounty, the gift store was having problems of its own.

Books, tapes, records and souvenirs were being knocked to the floor and moved around at night. Chuck and the cashier at the gift shop were first annoyed, but now concerned. They were responsible for the damaged items and wondered if some kind of crazy person was loose on The Pier. Despite talking every precaution possible, some of the merchandise always seemed to end up on the floor or moved to another location in the shop.

It would have been almost impossible for some disgruntled employee or even the current cashier to be responsible for the strange events because no one was able to enter the shop until Chuck arrived and unlocked it. When the place was closed down at night, Chuck was always the last person out. After exhausting all the conventional explanations, Chuck talked his situation over with me and was willing to consider the unconventional.

Chuck agreed to allow me to come to the gift shop early on Monday morning before it actually opened. He arrived at a few minutes after eight o'clock and we entered the gift store together. In one corner near where some books about the Bounty were kept for display and sale, I saw several items lying on the floor. The same situation was present near the cash register.
I began to wonder if the old pier somehow moved slightly as tides came and went. Perhaps a vibration occurred during the night that knocked items on to the floor? Maybe some employee thought this was a great way to annoy their boss and managed to copy Chuck's key to the shop? I was still trying to play the skeptic when I noticed something.

Several paperback books of the same title were stacked on the cash register counter. The same books were also kept on shelves on the other side of the room behind some tapes, records and other items that always seemed to end up on the floor. I asked Chuck if the objects found on the floor or moved around were always found in the same places. He said they were. I asked him how long this had been going on. He said for a couple of months.

After the gift shop cashier arrived for work, I asked her how long the book title on the counter and the other side of the room had been available for sale at the store? She told me they started carrying it a couple of months ago. Although I don't recall the exact title, the book was a conspiratorial paperback about the actual mutiny that occurred on the real HMS Bounty.

The book told the story of the Bounty from another angle suggesting that Fletcher Christian had planned the mutiny even before the ship left England. Some sort of weird conflict between Fletcher Christian's family and Captain Bligh's family became the basis for this convoluted work. Because the book was cheap enough to be popular with tourists that purchased paperbacks to

read while getting a tan at the pool or beach, the bosses decided to offer it for sale.

I asked Chuck if he could arrange to shelve the books in the storeroom for a few nights. Seeing where I was coming from and tired of cleaning up the mess every morning, he agreed. I suggested he replace it with a paperback that took a more sympathetic and conventional view of the Mutineers plight. He did.

The following week I stopped by the Bounty to see Chuck. He had a big smile on his face and dragged me into the gift store. “Here’s the kid who solved our little problem!” I was introduced to one of the big supervisors of the store and exhibit that was there to check up on things. Although not totally comfortable with admitting that anything paranormal had happened in the first place, he agreed that my literary suggestion had stopped the overnight mess and damage.

The supervisor was from Chicago and had been brought up with enough mid-western ghost stories to be willing to consider the possibility that something strange had happened. Either way, he was just happy that his little store was finally at peace. I suggested he not annoy the Mutineers with any more book titles that weren’t friendly to their cause. He agreed.

I stayed in touch with Chuck for another year. George found a real job and moved. The cold spots continued, but no more visible manifestations were seen during that time that I was aware of. The gift shop remained at peace. I was certain that the ghost of one or more of the original Mutineers shared Brando’s concern that people not forget how bad things were seaman in those days.

It was gratifying to actually help solve a ghost problem, rather than just find new ways to diagnose it. I felt as though I had failed to contribute much when it came to Margaret’s warehouse haunting. I

felt even worse about what happened to Merrill and Brodie at the Jungle Prada restaurant. Although I had no part in their adventure, I wished that I had made a stronger argument against it.

Chapter Four
The UFO Club, The Kids With Missing Time, The Angel and Walter Cronkite

My knack for having paranormal witnesses and cases fall into my lap was a bit disconcerting. I wasn't always comfortable with it and wondered what forces were at work behind the scenes? Despite my reservations, it was all too interesting for me to give up and it was too late to try. The experiences I had in high school pointed me in one direction and placed me on a paranormal freeway with no exits.

As my junior year in high school began, I found myself being sucked into a whirlpool of unsettled problems. Although my relationship with The Colonel was back on track thanks to his friendship with my dad and his need for me to help him with various errands, I still wasn't allowed to speak with Mary Ann. Her parents took her to work with them over the summer and started teaching her the family business.

My house became like a ghost town. My father started making weekend trips to Texas to visit the millionaire that owned the resort where he worked. With expansion of the resort property planned, he found it necessary to work closely with the millionaire and his associates. My mother found herself trying to juggle work, her college studies and the responsibility of caring for sick relatives. Her trips to and from New York resumed and grew more frequent.

Even after moving her mother down to Florida and into a nursing home, she kept having to go up north to settle family business and deal with some of our other relatives. The Colonel was always

there for me if I had a problem or needed something and my folks were just a phone call away, but I still felt very vulnerable during that time. Margaret again came to my rescue. She started coming over after school and we renewed our close friendship. We also spent more time talking about the paranormal. That gave me an idea.

Margaret and I combined our collection of paranormal books, periodicals and articles. She cataloged them and I typed up a list of what was available. We started loaning them out to teens and adults that we met at various paranormal lectures and meetings around town. Many of the teens we knew that were interested in the unexplained attended our high school. Because our combined book collection had outgrown my room and was now located in a small storage area at the back of our garage, I suggested that we try and find a temporary home for it at school. She agreed.

Mr. Clark was a science and biology teacher and the resident mystic at our school. He offered occasional after dismissal lectures on various topics involving the unexplained and was fascinated by paranormal studies. Both Margaret and I were in his class during different periods. I suggested that we ask him about keeping the books in a large storage closet in the back of his classroom. That would make it easy for us to share and trade with students we knew were interested in the paranormal. Mr. Clark liked the idea and gave the go ahead.

Our science teacher was an unusual guy. Mr. Clark had been a college professor, but ran afoul of many of his peers because he espoused philosophical ideas that included reincarnation and an odd mixture of eastern and western religious teachings. That got him booted from the college campus and on to ours. Despite his reservations about conventional scientific thought and hypothesis, he taught science straight from the book and was a wonderful

educator.

Our little back room of books began to grow. Mr. Clark contributed some of his own books about the paranormal to the collection and a few of the other students that borrowed our books started donating some of the titles they already read to us. We had stacks of paperback and hard cover books, as well as magazines, newsletters and articles. To say that running a paranormal lending library at school was something I never expected to happen would be an understatement.

After the books in his walk-in closet became so numerous that they took on the appearance of a small bookstore, Mr. Clark devised a mini-lending library system that allowed us to keep track of the books and borrowers with little effort. He also suggested that we open our little library to any students or teachers that wanted to make use of it. Margaret and I liked that idea. It kept us out of trouble with the school administration and made our collection available to all interested parties.

As the first semester of my junior year progressed, I got the school spirit bug and tried finding a club to join. I wanted to get more involved with school activities and earn some extra credit. Most of the clubs met after school and offered some extra credit to participants, depending on the subject. There were math, science, chess, sports and other choices. After talking to some of the organizers from these clubs, I quickly discovered that most of them were actually cliques of students that knew each other forever. I knew that I wouldn't fit into to any of those.

Our mini-lending library of paranormal books operated before and after school. I helped out with that and noticed that although still small in number, more students were using it every day. That gave me an idea. I asked Mr. Clark if he could help me with the process of starting a UFO Club at the school. With his help, I could sneak

it in under the banner of Science and that would allow members to qualify for extra credit in that subject. He seemed surprised, but agreed to help.
UFOs are a fascinating topic that interested a lot of people and I was certain that I could get something like that off the ground. If I tried for a Paranormal Club, it might not be allowed to fit under the Science banner, would probably offend too many people and cause concern among some of the more religious students. Although I considered myself religious, I was not close minded.

After getting together with Margaret and a few other students that were as fascinated by the subject of UFOs and the paranormal as I was, we wrote up a charter and filled out the necessary paperwork for our club. Mr. Clark agreed to allow us to use his classroom as our primary meeting place and walked us through all the steps necessary to be approved. Approval came just in time for Club Week.

Club Week was five school days that were set aside for the clubs to recruit new members. During that time the charter members and organizers of the various clubs were allowed to pass out flyers and put up posters to let students know more about their club and where their first meeting would take place. The last day of Club Week was Club Day. On that day all the clubs met for the first time after school that semester and signed up new members.

With just a few charter members available to get the word out, we met for a strategy session after school in Mr. Clark's classroom on the first day of Club Week. Margaret and I joined Bob, Jenny, Jim and Billy to brainstorm some ideas and elect club officers. The first thing the others did was suggest that I act as the Spokesperson. We all voted and I got the job. I knew that was coming because no one else wanted the position.

I felt that the subject of UFOs was something you either loved,

hated or had no interest in. All we had to do was get the word out. Margaret and Bob agreed to design the flyers, and draw and hang the posters. Jim and Billy said they would take care of new member applications for our first meeting. I was in charge of getting copies made of the flyers and helping to distribute them. None of us had high expectations about the results of our campaign. We felt that most of the students at our school were into other things.

As spokesperson, I had to write a two minute speech outlining the purpose and goals of our club. On the second day of Club Week, I read the speech over the school public address system just after the morning announcements. I was preceded and followed by spokespersons for the other clubs. I thought they did much better than me, but the charter members of our club were happy with my performance.

By lunchtime, I had the master copy of our club flyer in my hands. I went to the office to get copies made, but hit a brick wall. Only one of two copiers was working and the other clubs and office workers were dominating its use. I knew that I would never get the copies made before the end of lunch if I waited around there. Thinking fast, I decided to use the copier in the library.

The school library was one of the newer buildings on campus. It was air conditioned and even students that could have cared less about reading ended up there at some point during the school day just to cool off. I approached one of the assistants to ask if I could use the Library copier. I was more than happy to pay for the copies, I just needed them in a hurry. She sent me to the Librarian.

Mrs. Michelle was the Librarian. She always had a stern look on her face, but was more helpful than people generally thought she would be. I explained my situation and showed her our flyer. She seemed fascinated by it and asked me to sit down in the reference

area and wait. About twenty minutes later, she handed me a pile of copies. She kept the original and told me to stop by later for some more. There was no charge.

I left some flyers in the office, the lunchroom and Mr. Clark's classroom. By the end of the day, they were all gone and that surprised me. By the time I got back to the library, Mrs. Michelle had another huge pile ready for me. I was also surprised to see that she had placed some on a table kept near the door for handouts and put one up on a bulletin board normally reserved for library news.

Mrs. Michelle had been the Librarian at Boca Ciega for a long time. I didn't know it at the time, but she was also the wife of George Michelle, a local television personality on WFLA-TV in St Pete. That gave her carte blanche when it came to doing most anything she wanted to do. Her husband did occasional reports on activities and programs at the school which helped it to maintain a positive public image.

When I arrived at the library the next day, Mrs. Michelle waved me over to the desk. She told me that quite a few students and teachers had taken my flyers. Two hundred had already been given out and the library assistants were busy making more. I assumed she was going to scold me for using up their copier supplies, but that wasn't the case at all. She was as surprised as I was about the interest in our club and told her husband about it.

Mrs. Michelle explained who her husband was and said that he called a friend of his at the St Petersburg Times and told him about what we were doing. His friend thought that the idea of a UFO Club at school was fascinating and wanted to cover our first meeting for his newspaper. Since it was my job to spread the word about our club, I was thrilled and said he would be welcome to attend. Mrs. Michelle was kind enough to secure permission for

the reporter to come on to school property and report on our meeting.

After thinking about it for a while, I wondered if I had made a mistake allowing the reporter to come to our meeting. Although people were taking a lot of our flyers, that didn't mean we were going to have a lot of students at our first meeting. If only a few showed up, we would be embarrassed in front of the press. Just to be on the safe side, I decided to discuss the whole thing with the charter members.

On the fourth day of Club Week, I met with the other charter members in Mr. Clark's classroom after school. I gave them an update on the successful distribution of our flyers and told them about the reporter. They didn't seem that concerned about having a member of the press at our first meeting and were happy with what I had accomplished to date. I was equally happy with their work.

Although everything seemed to be going well, I still doubted that more than a few people would actually show up to join us on Club Day. It was one thing to take a flyer, but another to stay after school to join a club that was new and untried. Everyone knew that the established clubs were made up of cliques and if you didn't belong to the right one, that could easily ruin your social standing in school. It could also limit your access to the student government.

Club Day arrived and I was glad it was a Friday. I was stressed out and emotionally spent. Once again I had allowed my interest in the paranormal to overtake my life. Why couldn't I have just stuck with the mini-lending library and joined an established club? Now I was responsible for the success of a new club with a narrow appeal that could end up embarrassing me and my friends.

Those thoughts were still going through my mind as I arrived at

Mr. Clark's classroom after the last period of the day to help set up the room for our first club meeting. I wanted to appear optimistic to the others, so I suggested we bring some extra chairs into an area that was normally separated from the classroom by a divider and used for storage. They reluctantly agreed and we set up a pile of extra chairs just in case.

Since I would be conducting the meeting, I was still organizing my thoughts when students started coming in. There were just a few at first, but soon I saw that all of our efforts hadn't been in vain. The room was almost full when teachers started arriving. We opened the divider and within minutes, there was barely enough room to accommodate everyone.

The reporter from the St Petersburg Times arrived just before the meeting began and his photographer immediately started taking pictures of the overflow crowd. The real surprise occurred when our School Principal showed up. We welcomed him and asked if he would sit up front with us. I began the meeting by introducing myself, the charter members of our club and Mr. Clark. He looked as shocked as the rest of us at the number of people that showed up. I thanked our Principal for approving our club and Mrs. Michelle for helping us to get it off the ground.

After explaining the purpose and goals of our club, I gave a brief summary of some of the reasons that I believed UFOs to be a phenomenon worthy of study and scientific consideration. I also shared some personal stories which explained what lead to my interest in the subject. After reminding the students that wanted to join our club to fill out a membership application, I opened the meeting to anyone that wanted to share their UFO sighting with us.

The first person to stand up was our School Principal. I recognized him and stood in stunned silence as he shared his memories of an amazing UFO encounter with us. While serving in Vietnam, he saw

a nocturnal light type of UFO. The object looked round or oval and had a greenish glow. It kept dipping down towards his encampment until it finally went away. He reported the incident to the officer of the day and the O.D. told him to forget about it, saying he wasn't about to write up a report on a UFO. That bothered him and I could see that talking about it helped our Principal to get the whole thing off his chest.

Although the box for completed new member applications was quickly filling to the point that it was overflowing, there were a lot of people like the Principal, teachers and some students that came just to share their stories and learn more about the phenomenon. UFO witnesses stood up, one after another, and told us about their sightings. After an hour, I finally had to wind things up. I reminded everyone present that in addition to joining our club, they were welcome to take advantage of our lending library and many did.

Before the meeting was over, I recognized the reporter from the St Petersburg Times and thanked him for covering our meeting. He responded by asking me if we planned to provide a local phone number for people that wanted to report UFO sightings. I hadn't thought about that because we were supposed to be an after school UFO Club, not a paranormal research society.

I looked at the Principal for some guidance and he said that anyone wanting to contact the UFO Club could call the school switchboard or send mail to the school street address. Messages and mail would be passed on to the club officers. I thanked our Principal for his help and told the reporter that we would return calls or letters as time permitted. I announced the date of our next meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

It still took another hour to get everyone out of the room. The reporter spoke with our Principal, Mr. Clark, myself, the other

charter members of the club and some of the people that attended the meeting. Over seventy books and a number of periodicals had been borrowed from our lending library by students and teachers, and we had close to one hundred and fifty new member applications. Another sixty came in over the next few days because we ran out.

Even after things settled down over the next few weeks, we ended up with over one hundred members that regularly attended our meetings for the rest of that year. To keep things moving along, I suggested that we break our members up into smaller groups and place one charter member in charge of each group. The others agreed and we implemented that plan. The charter members took attendance, kept tabs on the people in their group and made sure every had what they needed in terms of information, book loans and responsibilities.

Our club met twice a month and remained popular. Even non-members sat in on our meetings to hear about what was going on in the world of UFOs. We accepted their presence, but had to move our meeting location from Mr. Clark's classroom to the lunchroom to accommodate the additional people. Fortunately, the school administration was friendly to our cause. I think they were just happy that there was finally a school club that welcomed everyone and didn't perpetuate the cliques that ran usually ran everything. During our second meeting I was elected as Club President and remained Spokesperson. Everyone was happy with the job I had done so far, but I felt forced into those positions. I didn't want to be the boss and never dreamed that the club would have so many members. All I wanted to do was talk about UFOs with others interested in the topic and get some extra credit.

The article about our club appeared in a Sunday Edition of the St Petersburg Times. It brought us a massive amount of publicity,

including lots of calls and letters. Like the other clubs, we had a small box in the office for phone messages, letters and notes. It was full every time I checked it. Most of the calls and letters were about UFO sightings in the area.

With so much going on, I suggested that we hold weekly administrative meetings in Mr. Clark's classroom and limit attendance to the charter members and Mr. Clark. We were all club officers now and he was our sponsor. The most important item of business at our first administrative meeting was finding a way to deal with all the UFO sightings and requests for information that were coming in.

When we wrote the original charter and organized our club, we never expected to be placed in a position of having to process UFO sightings, especially those that came from sources outside of the school. We had to tread carefully when it came to this matter and sought advice from Mr. Clark. He suggested that we collect additional information about the sightings reported to us and write up reports. Those reports would be read aloud at our member meetings for the benefit of all those present.

We liked his suggestion and implemented it, along with some of our own. Most of our investigative work could be done over the phone or by mail. If we needed to meet someone in person, it would have to be under Mr. Clark's supervision. He became a wonderful mentor in terms of offering suggestions and stepping in when an adult was needed. Mr. Clark was happy because his affiliation with the club filled his once poorly attended, occasional after school talks about alternative subjects to overflowing.

The requests we received for more information were mostly questions about the phenomenon. I took on the responsibility of answering those by letter or phone. A few local organizations and community groups were interested in having someone from our

club come and speak to them. With the permission of the school and the help of Mr. Clark, I began presenting short programs about UFOs and our club.

This was all new to me. I had been desperately trying to keep a low profile with the hope of remaining in good standing with my parents. Once I saw that was impossible, I accepted my fate and gave up. I didn't see anything wrong with talking about UFOs and other paranormal subjects in public. Maybe I wasn't from a wealthy or influential family, but I had just as much of a right to represent my school and one of its clubs as the members of the various cliques did.

None of the original charter members of the UFO Club (including myself) were school movers and shakers, accept for Jenny. The rest of us were students with few friends and even less influence. When we were suddenly thrust into the limelight, it angered the other clubs and school clique members that had their noses stuck up in the air long before we came along.

Despite their protests and a few nasty calls to our local school board, the principal stuck behind us and we continued to be a positive force in terms of publicity for the school. When push came to shove, the other clubs had far fewer members and most of them never did much for the school. They consistently lost statewide competitions whenever they participated and were all about themselves.

Jenny helped by going to some of the trouble makers and putting them in their place. She was the daughter of a well-known local real estate developer with a huge amount of political and economic influence. Apart from her family, Jenny was a member of the student council and belonged to several of the school's most influential cliques. That began to change after she started attending Mr. Clark's occasional lectures about the unexplained. Her

commitment to the student government remained strong, but she saw less and less of her snobby friends.

I met Jenny in World History class around the start of the first semester. Her desk was next to mine. She became curious about me after she noticed that I lugged around a huge sack of books about the paranormal and exchanged titles with other students before and after class. Those were the days before we had fully organized our book collection and began using Mr. Clark's back room as a lending library, rather then just a book storage area.

I recall that the first time she spoke to me, she said something funny like, "I guess your some kind of Supernatural Santa around here." She was referring to my ever present bag of paranormal books. I laughed and explained what I during. She thought it was an amazing idea and went to Mr. Clark's classroom with me to view our growing collection of titles.

Although I could tell that Jenny didn't know much about the paranormal from the first conversation we had, she was like a kid in a candy store when she saw all the titles we had available. She borrowed a number of the books and proved to be an apt pupil when it came to learning more. Jenny eventually helped Margaret and I organize our collection using Mr. Clark's system in her free time.

Although I enjoyed Jenny's company and appreciated her help, I was also a bit concerned. I knew that she was a member of the student government and that meant she had to belong to one or more cliques. Those people were not to be trusted. It took me a while to figure out that she was trying to crawl out from under that elitist umbrella. When I did, one of the reasons for her interest in the paranormal became more than just shocking.

Jenny had light brown hair and was stunningly beautiful. I actually

saw guys from the football team and student council beg her for a date (and I do mean beg). I thought she was very attractive, but hoped we could remain friends and nothing more. Every once in a while I got the impression that she wanted me to ask her out, but I knew that would be a bad idea.

I was honestly afraid of getting involved with anyone at that time, especially someone like Jenny with all the school connections she had. I saw my life as a kind of mess and was much better at friendships than dating. I was sixteen years old and had already managed to seriously date two girls and totally screw up those relationships. I tried too hard and chose girls to date that were just too different than I was.

Jenny and I became casual friends and she was thrilled when I decided to give the UFO Club idea a try. She was very supportive and Jenny stuck with us despite the disparaging remarks that came from some of her peers. When things took off and we had so much success during that first meeting, I could see she could not have been happier. Despite being a part of the school elite, I quickly learned that she didn't have a stuck-up bone in her entire body.

I was apprehensive about leading the UFO Club and no one was more surprised when it turned out to be very lucky for me in many ways. Mary Ann's parents calmed down about me. I got the impression that they read the newspaper article about our club and realized that I wasn't the devil, just someone interested in UFOs. She bugged her folks until they finally allowed her to join our club and hang out with me again. Mary Ann wasn't loud or noisy, but she could be a real force of nature when it came to getting her way.

I knew there were certain dangers in starting and maintaining a UFO club or organization after reading about the experiences of others in UFO books and periodicals. More than a few UFO

research organizations fell prey to egos, over-structuring and even government interference. Well, I wasn't much concerned about the government infiltrating our little group, but I also didn't want it to degenerate into yet another school clique or be governed by some silly system of rewards and demerits as some of the other clubs were.

Margaret, Bob, Jenny, Mary Ann, Jim, Billy and I became the nucleus of the UFO Club and shared the administration responsibilities as club officers. My father taught me to delegate authority, and that's what I did as the club president. I made sure that all the officers had something to do. I also stayed on top of any requests made by club members. I wanted to be sure that the club officers took care of those and helped the members they were responsible for to be as involved with our group as they wanted to be.

Our weekly administrative meetings in Mr. Clark's classroom kept things interesting. They were an opportunity to discuss sightings reported to us and anything else that related to UFOs. I gave little talks to help bring the others up to speed on UFO history and current events. I shared many of the things I learned by reading all the books I had and newsletters I received over the past few years. We became a tight knit group and everyone enjoyed themselves. I suggested that we add Mary Ann to our list of officers and explained how helpful she had been to me ever since I met her. Without going into too many details, I explained that she had information about UFOs which could benefit our investigations and help us all better understand the phenomenon. She agreed to participate in our investigations and reveal the information she had about UFOs over a period of time. We voted and she joined our little administrative group.

Now just a few weeks old, we were still struggling to process all

the UFO sightings and reports that came in after the article about us appeared in the St Petersburg Times. Most weren't really spectacular, but they were an opportunity to get everyone in the club involved with hands-on UFO research. Mr. Clark held a special class for those that wanted to participate in our investigations. I assigned cases to the officers and they passed them on to club members that attended that class and wanted to investigate sightings.

The first major case that I assigned to myself was a tough one. Several parents contacted us by phone to say that their kids saw a UFO land on a playground at a nearby elementary school. The school was somewhat close to my house and about halfway the distance between Boca Ciega High School and my home. It was too good for me to pass on to anyone else and I lived right in the area where it all happened.

That case came to us in the form of several phone messages. I returned the calls and took as much information over the phone as I could to be certain it wasn't a joke or hoax. Once I was certain that everything was on the up and up, I told Jenny about the case. She got very excited and asked if she participate in the investigation. I was fine with that and we contacted Mr. Clark to get things set up.

I asked the two sets of parents that reported the incident to us and their four children to meet us at Mr. Clark's classroom on a Friday evening. There were several sporting events scheduled for that night and the school was already open. Mr. Clark made himself available to us so that we would have an adult present during our conversations with the parents and their children. Margaret and Mary Ann also came and took notes.

We got there early, discussed what the parents reported to us and waited. The parents and children arrived on time and we invited

them to tell us all what happened. A group of kids, ages 9-11, were playing at a school playground around 4pm on the previous Friday when they spotted a disc-shaped UFO hovering over the playground and sports field in back of the school. Everything got very quiet and the object proceeded to land in an open area between the swing sets and a baseball field.

After landing, the object remained still. It was a dull metallic, silvery color. The kids recalled that the disc stayed on the ground for a few minutes, then took off slowly and hovered again. A few seconds later, it went straight up at a very fast speed. Frightened, they went home and told their parents about the whole thing. All of the kids involved lived just a few blocks from the school playground and all of them attended that school. There were a total of nine children involved. Seven were boys and two were girls. The four that came to speak with us were boys, two from each of the four parents that came with them. The other three boys and two girls had parents that didn't want to get involved in the investigation. I knew this would be problematic, but decided to deal with it later. Although we had already been told a truly amazing story, there were even more surprises to come.

Wondering how long the UFO remained at the playground, I asked the parents what time their children arrived home. They said it was around nine o'clock. I was taken aback by their answer and wondered how a UFO could remain landed on a public playground and sports field for so many hours without anyone else noticing. And what about the kids? Why would they stand there for all that time without going to tell someone?

The parents told me that they didn't believe their kids when they were first told the UFO landing story. Once it got past dinner time, both sets of parents went out looking for their kids after calling each other several times on the phone to see if any of them had

arrived home yet. The families knew each other and were very concerned that their children hadn't come home for supper.

Their first stop was the school playground. No one was there. Both sets of parents went there at different times between sixty-thirty and seven o'clock in the evening. Neither saw a UFO or any children playing on the playground. It was dark by six and the playground was closed by then, but not locked. The fence that surrounded that area had a broken gate.

After looking everywhere, they stopped at all their friend's houses. Some of their friends were also overdue and those parents were equally concerned. At that point, they separately called the police and waited. Police arrived at both homes and were in the middle of taking statements when all of the children arrived safely back at their respective homes. The police didn't stay to hear the UFO stories, said the kids were probably just up to some kind of monkeyshines and warned them not to do it again.

The children that we talked to told their parents about the UFO, but their parents said they seemed confused when they finally got home. They had no idea it was nine o'clock at night. In their timeframe, it should have been around four thirty or maybe five o'clock at the latest. Besides coming home so late, the children's clothes were disheveled as if they dressed quickly.

Jenny asked the boys where they were during all that time. They said that they didn't know and that troubled me greatly. I kept thinking about the Betty and Barney Hill case and wondered if we were already in well over our heads? Either way, I wanted a look at that school playground.

After the meeting, I asked Jenny if she wanted to go to the playground the following day. I barely finished asking before she offered to drive us there. Jenny already had her driver's license

and a car. She said she would pick me up around 10am and I couldn't wait.

Jenny arrived on time and drove me to the elementary school playground. We were very excited and began looking around right away. It didn't take long to notice a large circle of flattened grass in the playground and sports field area. We were stunned and more than a little shaken. The circle reminded me of the one I saw on the water tower property in East Meadow.

We had cameras with us to photograph the area, but drove back to my house to get a measuring tape and some small plastic storage containers to take soil and grass samples. I thought it would be a good idea to bring Mary Ann along as a third witness to what we discovered, so I ran over to her house to get ask if she wanted to come with us. She did and brought her own camera as well.

Jenny, Mary Ann and I were back at the elementary school within minutes. We photographed the entire area, measured the circle and took samples of the soil and grass in and outside of the circular area of flattened grass. While we were at the school, a maintenance worker came out of the main building to talk to us.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked. "It appeared here last week and everyone is worried that it's some kind of a toxic spill."
I told the worker what we thought it was. He laughed and said, "Well, your explanation is as good as any I've heard so far."

We took a statement from the worker and included it in our report. Jenny suggested that we go back to my house and try to contact the parents and children again. Mary Ann called both sets of parents while Jenny and I sorted out the samples from the playground and made some notes that would be used later for our report. After she finished calling, Mary Ann said that only one family was home. They agreed to meet with us and Jenny drove us over to their

house a few blocks away.

Jenny, Mary Ann and I agreed to keep the news about the new evidence we discovered at the elementary school to ourselves until we completed another interview with the boys involved. It was obvious we were missing something here and we needed to talk with the boys and their parents some more. I tried reaching Mr. Clark to ask him to come with us, but he wasn't answering his phone. I knew this couldn't wait, so we took the plunge and went on without him.

The parents were glad to see us. Before we could ask them any questions, they said that their kids had a rough night's sleep. Although it might have been because we had the meeting the evening before and talked about their experiences, I had a feeling more was going on than I cared to think about.

The boys came in from their backyard to join us in the living room. When their parents asked them to tell us about their sleep problems, they both said that they hadn't slept well for the past several nights. The boys were nervous and I didn't want to add to any trauma they might be experiencing, so I suggested we speak with them separately.

I asked Jenny to interview one boy and Mary Ann to interview the other while I spoke to the parents. I thought a one on one interview without their parents present would make it easier for them to open up and tell us anything they felt might be important. Speaking to the parents without the boys present might also yield some more information.

Jenny spoke with one of the boys in the back yard, while Mary Ann talked with his brother in the room that the two boys shared. It turned out to be a good plan. Jenny and Mary Ann did a terrific job and ended with several pages of notes and lots of information.

They wisely kept what they learned to themselves until after we left the house.

I spoke with the parents for a while and found out that both boys had rashes and bruises on their bodies the day after the UFO sighting at the school. Their parents might not have noticed, but the family went swimming at the beach on the day after the incident. They became concerned when they saw the rashes and bruises. The rashes cleared up after a few days and any black and blue marks from the bruises were all but gone by now.

I recalled that one of the UFO newsletters I read mentioned how UFO witnesses sometimes try and fabricate information to please the people interviewing them. This usually happens when the witnesses have some previous knowledge about the subject. The newsletter suggested looking around the home for UFO books. I looked at the book shelves they had. There was nothing but fictional novels, magazines and a set of encyclopedias. No UFO or paranormal book titles or periodicals.

I immediately saw the value of interviewing UFO witnesses in their own homes. Apart from being able to check out their book collection, neither the parents nor the boys had bothered to mention anything about the rashes or bruises during our meeting at the school the night before. Either they felt uncomfortable or we were just asking the wrong questions at that time. Regardless, we were certainly on the right track and I really wanted to get to the bottom of whatever happened during that UFO encounter.

After Jenny and Mary Ann completed their interviews, I told the parents it was time for us to go. I explained that we needed to speak with the other two boys and their parents before sharing any more information about our investigation. However, I promised to get back to them before the weekend was over.

Jenny treated us all to fast food on the way back to my house. My parents were both gone for several days, so we had the run of the place and chowed-down at my dining room table while we talked about the interviews. Not surprisingly, the boys were having frightening dreams about little beings. Mary Ann could immediately relate to that and shared her story with Jenny before we went further.

I could see that Jenny was fascinated by what Mary Ann was telling her. I just hoped it wouldn't scare her off. It didn't. Jenny immediately saw the connection between what Mary Ann was experiencing and what may have happened to the kids at that playground. I asked Mary Ann if anything happened to her that night. She said nothing happened and told us she had been sleeping well without any strange occurrences for some time.

We were finally able to contact the other family and visited their house less than an hour later. As with the others, these boys were having sleep problems. We interviewed everyone separately and came up with identical stories. Both of these boys also had rashes and bruises on their bodies for a few days, but they were certain it was from wrestling around on their back lawn. I was less certain than they were.

By late Saturday afternoon, Jenny, Mary Ann and I were just completely floored! I suggested that we take some time to write up our notes, contact the other club officers and see if they wanted to take a look at the affected area of grass at the school. Mary Ann volunteered to call them. Bob, Billy and Jim met us later at the elementary school playground and were as impressed as we were when they saw what I believed was a saucer nest.

I finally got Mr. Clark on the phone and briefed him on our latest adventures. He took a ride to the elementary school and agreed that the circular area was odd. Clark said he would try to find someone

to examine our soil and grass samples. He was as stunned as we were with the developments in the school playground case and suggested that I brief the entire club membership on it during the upcoming meeting.

Mr. Clark scolded us for going to the parents' homes without him. I agreed that it might not have been the best idea to begin with, but I explained what I felt was the advantage of interviewing witnesses in their own home. I also suggested that his presence might have hampered our progress by causing the kids or their parents to clam up about what was happening. I said that most teachers still made people nervous. He laughed and agreed, but insisted I try and take him anytime we interviewed witnesses outside of the school.

Jenny, Mary Ann and I got together and began preparing a preliminary report on the elementary school playground UFO case. We also decided to take Mr. Clark's advice by briefing the membership at the next club members meeting on Friday. Meanwhile, I began pondering another problem that I was sure everyone present had overlooked.

Before we spilled the beans on what we thought happened at the school playground, there was a job to do that no one was looking forward to doing. We had to speak with both sets of parents and tell them what we thought was happening to their kids. I wanted Mr. Clark with us when we did this, so I set up a meeting with him for Monday afternoon. Mr. Clark had a good working knowledge of the metaphysical, but he was as new to the subject of Alien kidnappings as we were.

Monday came and I brought Mary Ann to the meeting with Mr. Clark. He sat mesmerized as Mary Ann explained her own story of Alien encounters and related it to those of the four boys from the school playground case. After grasping the consequences of it all, he agreed to accompany Jenny, Mary Ann and I to the homes of

both sets of parents that evening. We visited them separately to lessen the shock and explained what we thought was happening.

We began by briefing the parents about the discovery of the circular area of flattened grass in the elementary school playground. Next, I explained what I thought might have happened to their boys. Without sharing Mary Ann's story, I told them that it was entirely possible that the boys had been taken aboard the object they saw and kept on board for several hours.

I said that it wasn't unusual for anyone taken aboard such a craft to experience memory loss. That would explain why they thought it was much earlier when they were released and finally headed home. I also explained how the rashes and bruises could be evidence of a kind of physical exam that UFO occupants sometimes performed on those they brought aboard. Without providing too much information about other cases, I gave both sets of parents a thumbnail sketch about Alien kidnappings.

I felt more comfortable explaining everything to the parents with Mr. Clark present, but I could see that he was as upset as they were. It was a hard pill to swallow, but I got the impression that they already suspected a lot more was going on with their kids than they knew about. Both sets of parents opted to have their kids in the room while we explained everything and the children took it surprisingly well.

Mr. Clark and the club officers all agreed that keeping the information about the elementary school playground case under our hats would accomplish nothing. We had more than enough proof that something unexplained happened, so it was time to go public. I thought it would be better to keep the parents and children out of the public eye, but Clark and some of the other charter members felt that no one would believe our story unless we were able to produce some of the witnesses involved.

I yielded to the majority opinion and we went to speak with both sets of parents again. We asked them if they would join us at the Friday meeting of our UFO Club and be willing to allow the boys to talk about what they remembered. Both parents agreed to come and bring their boys to the meeting. I made sure that they understood that news of an encounter like this one would probably end up in the newspaper on and TV, but they felt that their kids would be better able to deal with and accept what happened if they were able to share it with others.

Mrs. Michelle helped us get our club started, so I felt that I owed it to her to explain what we would be doing at our Friday club meeting. I thought her husband might be interested and he was. George Michelle called me at school on Wednesday and wondered if I would appear on his early morning television program on Friday. His program preceded a network morning show and had a substantial viewing audience.

Before agreeing to appear on the show, I spoke with Mr. Clark, Mary Ann, Jenny and the other officers of the UFO Club. They all agreed it was a good opportunity, but I didn't really want to go it alone. I knew Mary Ann was a No Go because her parents and The Colonel would never allow it. Mr. Clark would be busy preparing for school, so he couldn't join me. Jenny and Bob were the only others that were interested, but Bob bowed out because he was worried about what his parents might say.

Jenny and I got the duty. We arrived at the television studio around 5:30am and George briefed us on how things would go. Jenny had all the film developed that we took at the playground over the weekend, so we brought those photos along as visuals. George visited the elementary school with his own video unit and camera on Thursday. He managed to get some comments from the maintenance man we spoke to and the school administration.

The maintenance man confirmed that the circular area of affected grass suddenly appeared without explanation. The school administration had little to say because the events in question happened after school. George didn't mention the possibility of alien kidnappings, just the UFO sighting and possible disc landing. We dropped the bomb about the children with missing time during the show. By the time the UFO Club was ready to meet that afternoon, things were crazy.

The lunchroom was packed to the rafters with students and teachers. People from the community lined up outside to watch and listen through the opened windows facing the walkways. The St Petersburg Times came back and George showed up with a film crew to cover our event for the WFLA news broadcast. More TV news film crews arrived while the meeting was in progress.

George Michelle neglected to tell us that his early morning show recently expanded its viewing audience. The program was now seen on several stations throughout Florida as part of a mini-syndication deal. That meant that our little story was quickly becoming a big one all over the state.

Mary Ann, Jenny and I presented our report on the elementary school playground case. The four boys that witnessed the object gave brief statements and their parents talked a little about the rashes and bruises on the boys. After they spoke, I gave a brief presentation and explained the nature of alien kidnappings and why we thought that was what might have happened to the boys. After the meeting ended, people had a thousand questions and the press was everywhere.

It didn't surprise me that George wanted Jenny and I back on the show, along with the boys. We all agreed and showed up for his show on Monday morning. A local college professor also appeared

on the show as a counterbalance to our presentation to represent the skeptical view. He called everything we reported ‘speculation’ and I ended up in a one on one with him.

I got into how all science is speculation and hypothesis. I pointed out that scientists often change their minds about established facts based on new information. He fired back with the usual argument that even if other life forms existed somewhere in the universe, they probably wouldn’t be able to find or visit the earth. I made the point that skeptics ignore evidence that life exists elsewhere in the universe and has already visited our planet. Most of those present felt that I won the day.

Most of the TV program was devoted to the elementary school playground case. The boys told their stories and we commented on what we thought might have happened during the entire event. It made for terrific television and brought even more attention to our UFO Club. However, I was a lot less interested in having my face on television and more interested in keeping things moving in my personal life.

I’ll be the first to admit that the UFO Club became a distraction for me. It took my mind off personal problems that were mounting daily. My parents were never home and the continued problem of sick relatives made frequent weekend flights between New York and Florida a common occurrence for me. I hated flying and got tired of trying to balance school, work and everything else I was doing.

I finally put my foot down and refused to travel back and forth between New York and Florida. I stayed at home and got a part-time job in the hospital kitchen where my mother worked. That took up most of my afternoons each week, but I liked earning my own money and enjoyed the work. After starting out as a pot washer, I became a prep cook and my services were constantly in

demand in the hospital kitchen. I wanted to work more hours, but I just couldn't do it and remain on track with my studies and the UFO Club.

Jenny got in the habit of picking me up after work most days of the week. After I got my Driver's permit, she allowed me to practice my driving using her car. I took Driver's Education during the second semester of my Junior Year and finally got my license just before school ended. My parents rewarded my efforts by allowing me to have their two year old Ford Maverick. My father had a company car and my mother got her own after a while.

The UFO Club had a very successful first year. The elementary school playground case and several others helped bring a lot of attention to our group. I began to receive invitations to appear on local radio shows, television programs and even got a few speaking invitations at local libraries and clubs. With the good comes the bad. The bad was news that Margaret was moving away from the area.

Margaret's dad received an excellent job offer on the east coast. Although he didn't like living there, the offer was too good to refuse and he accepted it. Margaret was very upset about having to move, but had no say in the matter. She said her goodbyes to me and the other officers in the UFO Club at a little going away celebration we arrange for her at school. It was an emotional event and it was obvious she would be missed by all.

Margaret moved away, but Toby and I still hung out every once in a while. Mary Ann, Jenny, Bob and I became a tight group of friends. Jim had his own circle of friends. Jenny had a lot of social obligations and remained a part of the student government. However, she started avoiding the school cliques altogether and hung out with us.

After appearing on the George Michelle show together, Jenny and I became a team. Whenever I investigated a UFO case, had a public speaking engagement or did a guest spot for TV or radio, she was there. I really appreciated the moral support that she provided and came to rely on her as much as she did me to keep the UFO Club going. We also attended church and various religious youth activities together. She became a much-needed stabilizing factor in my personal life.

As teenage hormones really started kicking in, it came as no surprise that Mary Ann and Bob started dating and got serious after a short space of time. That made me nervous, because I knew that it seemed almost natural that Jenny and I would do the same. My life was still an unsettled mess by the time my Junior Year of high school ended and I didn‘t want to drag anyone else into it. I was already torn between working, my UFO Club responsibilities, speaking and guest spot invitations, some volunteer work I did at church and my family obligations. There wasn’t much room for casual socializing or romance.

Spending so much time with Jenny made me realize that she was a unique and talented person. Jenny wasn’t an athlete, but she enjoyed physical activities. Her parents owned several horses and we often went horseback riding together. She had a real love for horses and a knack for handling them that surprised everyone. I knew how to ride English or western saddle thanks to a series of trips to dude ranches in upstate New York during my younger days, but that was the extent of my equestrian experience.

Swimming was another favorite of hers and Jenny was very good at it. She also ran the track and sometimes played basketball on the evenings that we volunteered at a local church youth center. I did alright when it came to sports, but didn’t come close to her when it came to physical prowess. Add to all this the fact that she was an

honor student and it was easy to see that she outclassed me in every way possible.

Summer vacation brought Jenny and I closer together. I don't know whether it was hormones or something more, but we began dating. She was kind, understanding and thoughtful and those were traits I could not ignore. Her parents were not thrilled to see us dating because her life was structured, while mine was all over the place. My parents were working people and hers were wealthy.

I didn't want the friendship and close association that Jenny and I developed to suffer as a result of our romantic connection, so I suggested that we keep it casual and set aside a couple of nights a week for actual dating. She was fine with that and I'm sure her parents were glad to see that we weren't the kind of couple that were constantly hanging all over each other.

Sometime around early August, one of my cousins died unexpectedly and I had to fly to New York to attend the funeral. My folks couldn't get away, so I would be representing our family. I asked Jenny if she wanted to come with me and she was thrilled. She had never been to New York City and jumped at the chance to go. Her parents were less enthusiastic about the idea.

Although going to a funeral was hardly a vacation, I needed a break and this would be it. I cashed in a pile of savings bonds that were given as gifts to me when I was born and made plans for a week and a half in the Big Apple. My parents gave me some money, but I wanted this to be a once in a lifetime experience for Jenny. My father knew a lot of important people in New York, so he was able to get us tickets to a popular Broadway Play and reservations at a couple of excellent restaurants.

Jenny's parents were against the trip, but both of us would start the new school year as high school seniors and they knew their

daughter was growing up. I was honest and told them that Jenny and I would be staying at my grandmother's apartment in the city. We would be the only ones there, but there were two separate bedrooms. They agreed to the trip and we flew out a day later on Thursday. The flight was uneventful and one of my relatives picked us up at the airport.

We stayed at my grandmother's apartment in the Bronx (one of the Boroughs of New York City). Although my grandmother was now in a nursing home in Florida, my folks kept the apartment to use when they visited the city. It was rent-controlled and located in a quaint Italian neighborhood. My Grandmother was Scandinavian, but that neighborhood was the kind of place where everyone fit in as long as they didn't start any trouble.

Jenny's head was spinning. A visit to New York City is always a cultural wake up call for anyone that has never had that experience before. We attended my cousin's funeral during our first night in the city and his burial the next day. I bowed out of the family get together that followed the trip to the cemetery because I had been to enough of those in the last couple of years. Instead, Jenny and I went out that afternoon and evening.

Four days went by and we had already been to the Museum of Natural History, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, the Bronx Zoo, a Broadway play, a couple of art museums and several restaurants. Jenny was surprised at how easy we got around on mass transit. Despite an excellent system of railroads, subways and buses, there were some places I wanted to take her that were better accessed by car.

My grandmother's car was kept in a garage around the block from the apartment house. We used it so I could show Jenny where I grew up and some of the places connected to paranormal events that I told her about. We drove all over Long Island for another

day and half and stayed out there overnight in a bed and breakfast. We visited the infamous town pool in East Meadow, Mount Misery, Mary's Grave and other places.

By the time we returned to my grandmother's apartment, it was Thursday evening and we had been in the city for a little over a week. Jenny and I got some Chinese food to go and spent that evening recuperating from all of our adventures. We talked a lot about the week's activities and her family. Jenny had siblings, but they were older and had already moved out. She was the youngest and that constantly kept her parent's attention on her. While we were talking, Jenny suddenly changed the topic of our conversation and asked, "Do you believe in angels?" I said that I did. I believed in God and angels were mentioned many times in the bible. She replied, "That's good because you're speaking with one." I assumed that she was kidding around and told her that she was as close to anyone's idea of an angel as a human could get.

"You don't understand Bill," Jenny continued, "I am an angel." I didn't know what to think and was getting less amused with our conversation as the moments ticked by.
"I'm confused and maybe I missed something, but what are you trying to tell me?" I asked Jenny.

Jenny got very serious and explained that she was an angel. Actually, the person I was talking to was an angel that occasionally used Jenny to communicate with people. Needless to say, I was floored and still wondered if this was all some kind of bad joke? She assured me that it wasn't.

I asked the angel its name, but she said that I wouldn't be able to pronounce it even if she identified herself to me. When I asked if it was a female, she said that I probably wouldn't understand that either and that these kinds of questions were not the reason she came to me. She said that she wanted me to know that she

occasionally spoke through Jenny in case the need arose.

I knew that Jenny didn't do drugs, but I wondered if she was on some kind of prescription medication. I asked the angel to give me a minute and went into the bedroom she was using in my grandmother's apartment. I did a quick search through her things to see if there were any pill bottles or cases. I couldn't find any.

While I was going through her stuff, Jenny appeared in the bedroom doorway and said, "You're not going to find any medications among her possessions." Although she knew what I was looking for, it could have been a logical guess. She turned around and went back into the living room and I followed.

We sat down and I asked, "Does Jenny know that you're using her body like this?" She assured me that Jenny knew.

I admitted that I never heard of anything like this before and wondered why an angel would need to speak through a human. She told me that it was because people occasionally needed help and appearing to them in her regular form was simply too much for most people to take.

I asked her what kind of help she offered, and the angel replied, "I deliver messages from God and cause Jenny to help people when that is possible." That was it; I had enough for one night. I told Jenny that if this was a joke, it wasn't funny. At that point Jenny began talking about something else and I could see that the angel was gone, if it was ever there to begin with.

I waited for Jenny to finish her thought and said, "I just had a visitor. She told me she was an angel." I waited for a response. Jenny didn't know what to say, became very upset and started shaking her head.

"I wanted to tell you about this, but I was hoping it wouldn't happen while you were around," she explained. I didn't know

what to say, so I just listened.

Jenny told me that the incidents with the angel began two years ago when she was fourteen years old. She was horseback riding with a friend when her friend fell off her horse and was severely injured. Jenny knew that she had to go and get help, but felt compelled to stay. She felt as though she blacked out for a moment, than regained her composure and went for help.

Her friend was taken to the hospital. It turned out that she suffered a broken leg, a few fractures and some scratches, but she would recover. When Jenny visited her in the hospital, her friend told her that she said some strange things to her while she was lying injured on the ground. When Jenny asked what was said, her friend couldn't remember. All she knew was that they were the most amazing and comforting words she ever heard.

Jenny later had a dream in which the angel came to her and explained how that it would need to speak through her every so often. Jenny had the dream several times and began to doubt her own sanity, but the next incident that occurred made her believe that the whole thing might just be real.

She was on a Florida vacation with her parents shortly after the horseback riding incident. They were staying at a Miami hotel and enjoying a day at the beach when Jenny felt very ill. She went back to the hotel efficiency apartment they were renting and threw up. Thinking it might have something to do with the heat; she turned the air conditioning on to full and laid down for a nap.

The angel came to her while she was sleeping and said that a man at the beach was going to drown, but that he would be revived by an emergency medical technician if she intervened. Jenny woke up very disturbed. She didn't feel sick anymore and decided to go back to the beach to check on her parents.

The beach was in back of their hotel. Jenny arrived and everything was fine until she heard someone yelling for help. Jenny walked a short distance down the beach to discover a crowd of people standing around the Life Guard and a man he pulled out of the water. The man was in his mid-forties and was at the beach with his wife and three children.

Not knowing why, Jenny ran away from the people and through the hotel lobby until she found herself out in front by the circular driveway. She then ran to the busy street in front of the hotel where she saw an ambulance and flagged it down. The Emergency Medical Technicians arrived to where the drowned man lay less than two minutes later and revived him.

The man's grateful family thanked Jenny. As word spread about her good deed to the hotel management, they gave Jenny and her family a free night's stay and several meals on the house. Despite being the hero of the moment, Jenny was confused and didn't know how to feel about what was happening to her.

I told Jenny that I appreciated her situation, but needn't to go to bed. I said I would think about everything and discuss it with her in the morning. She understood how I felt and agreed that would be best. As I walked to one of the bedrooms, my head was full and I was exhausted. I woke up several times in the middle of the night wondering if this angel thing was real and how I could possibly handle it in terms of our relationship.

I woke up later than usual and saw that Jenny was still asleep. The strain of the previous night's conversation had taken a toll on both of us. I still didn't know what to think about it all. I really liked Jenny and didn't want to end our relationship, but how in the world would I cope with sharing her with an angel (real or imagined)?

When Jenny got up, I made us lunch. We sat down to eat at a small table that my grandmother kept in the kitchen. As we ate, I asked Jenny how she felt about continuing our relationship without any changes. She told me that she was fine with that and asked me how I felt about the events of the previous night.

I was honest and said that I really didn't know what to think about it, but I also pointed out that she hadn't given me any reason to doubt or distrust her. I suggested that we continue on and allow things to work out on their own. After all, we enjoyed each other's company and had similar interests. What kind of a paranormal researcher would I be if I was unwilling to accept an unexplained event that suddenly became a part of my own life?

Although we slept in separate bedrooms while staying at my grandmother's apartment, Jenny and I had already begun a physical relationship. It was the inevitable consequence of spending so much time together. That added to my concerns regarding the angel thing. Although I understood that our relationship was a completely separate affair from what she was experiencing with the angel, it was still very troubling to me. The last thing I wanted was to be accused of taking advantage of someone that might be mentally ill.

We returned to Florida and started preparing for our Senior Year in High School. Mary Ann joined us to go shopping for clothes and school supplies while Bob was in Georgia visiting relatives with his family. Mary Ann sensed that something was bothering me, but I told her it was just Senior Year jitters. I was still thinking about the angel incident, but brushed it off as the three of us finished shopping, went to the movies and had a bite to eat.

Jenny and I dropped Mary Ann off and took a ride out to the beach. We drove to Pass-A-Grille which had a spectacular view of the Gulf of Mexico. That was one of the places where I used to

bring my telescope to look at the Moon when my family first moved to Florida. We enjoyed a quiet stroll along the stone walkway and talked about how nervous we both were about our Senior Year.

I had a feeling that my relationship with Jenny was going to fall apart. Things were going too well and that was always a warning sign for me. Jenny was flawless. So flawless that even angels found her acceptable! Meanwhile, I was Joe Nobody with few plans for the future and a personal life in complete disarray.

School was starting in a short while and Jenny would have her choice of dozens of popular and far more stable guys to date. The best I could hope for was that we would part friends. In the meantime, I would enjoy her company and that's what I did as we walked along the beach and talked.

I was still working at the hospital part-time and saved enough for a down payment on a new car. My father agreed to co-sign for it and I was finally rid of the old Maverick. Instead, I was driving around a Pontiac Le Mans Sport Coupe. I chose that car because Bob's uncle owned the dealership and gave us a great deal on it.

My new car was great, but it was also costly. I had to cough up the money for the monthly car payment, insurance and gas. Jenny always wanted to fill up my gas tank using a credit card that her father gave her to use, but I hated that and rarely took her up on it. Instead, I started accepting speaking fees for my UFO seminars.

I never accepted money from community service organizations, but libraries had a budget to pay Speakers and I needed the money. I also accepted speaking fees from private organizations. Those funds kept me going and eventually allowed me to quit my job at the hospital. I loved telling people about my UFO and paranormal adventures and those meetings were great places to share

information and make good contacts.

School started and I began my Senior Year without any idea what I was going to do with the rest of my life. I was still too caught up in family and personal issues to see past those. My parents were working all the time and my father wasn't feeling well. I knew that the pressure of a job with many responsibilities was getting to him and my mother wanted him to retire.

A new obstacle was added to my already confused and convoluted existence. It was called Modular Scheduling. In an effort to save money and fit more students in fewer classes, the high school did away with typical class periods and went Mod. It drove everyone crazy because classes were all over the map. I could have one class in the morning and three hours off before my next one in the late afternoon. I might have one class on Monday and six on Tuesday.

Although it meant educational chaos for me and most of the student body, the school district put a happy face on the whole thing and told everyone what a great success they were having with Modular Scheduling. The only good thing that came out of it was that Mary Ann, Bob, Jenny and I could have lunch and hang out together most of the time. Toby occasionally joined us as well.

The UFO Club was still a big hit. George Michelle had Jenny and I on his show several more times and each appearance helped spread the word about our club and my investigations. I opened a post office box at the local post office to handle the mail and began writing a monthly newsletter. Anyone that wanted to receive it had to send me a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Mrs. Michelle ran off copies of it for me in the library at no charge and was very supportive of all I did.

George Michelle read all my newsletters and suggested that I begin submitting articles to publications that would pay for them. My

writing skills were primitive (and remain so), but my subjects were interesting and I really put my heart into the writing. Mr. and Mrs. Michelle helped me format them, write the necessary cover letters and taught me how to submit my articles.

To my complete surprise, a few were accepted by smaller publications. I was thrilled at the prospect of seeing my writing published again. The few extra bucks I received for the articles came in handy and I loved sharing my investigative work and limited knowledge with others. UFOs and the paranormal became as much a part of my life as breathing.

During the early 1970s, nine of the top ten most watched television entertainment shows were on CBS. No one who knows television history would argue with the fact that CBS was a network powerhouse during that time. That included their news division and the evening news broadcast anchored by the legendary Walter Cronkite.

In 1973, CBS News was seriously considering an investigative project about UFOs. Things were changing. People were growing weary of a steady diet of bad news thrown at them every day. The Vietnam War, antiwar protests, the Watergate scandal, terrorism and Middle Eastern conflicts were wearing viewers down. Any news organization that wanted to stay on top would have to offer people some alternatives.

Local news broadcasts, daytime television talk shows and late night radio programs had already experienced ratings success by covering paranormal issues, events and stories. Among subjects like Ghosts, Bigfoot, ESP, Psychic Powers, Reincarnation, Atlantis and Pyramid Power, UFOs were the clear winner when it came to overall public fascination.

The last time that CBS did a special about UFOs was in the 1960s.

Although filmed in black and white with a very small budget, it was hosted by Walter Cronkite and ended up as a ratings winner. With that proven track record, CBS made a decision to go ahead with their UFO project. Instead of a remake or continuation of the previous special, this one would be different and accommodating to the changing times.

CBS planned to look at the UFO phenomenon from the standpoint of witnesses, authors and investigators with little or no editorial comment. It would be an investigative piece, but the investigating would be left up to those involved with the subject. The only decision that hadn't been made was when and how the report would air. Some felt it should be a one-time Special, while others suggested a series of short investigative pieces to be shown in segments during network news broadcasts.

The only thing everyone at CBS agreed on was that Walter Cronkite should do the sit down interviews for the project. Once those were in the can, the material would be viewed and a final decision on the project format would be made. If worst came to worst, they could always show the reports in segments on slow news days. It was a no-lose situation.

Walter Cronkite insisted on doing his own research for the project because he had a special interest in UFOs. He picked the guests and topics and did all the pre-interviews. As it happened, part of Cronkite's research included reading a publication with a small piece that I wrote included in it. The topic of the article was the Air Force cover-up of UFO information and also included a few cases I investigated.

Just after my Senior Year of school began, I received a letter from CBS News indicating their interest in my work and desire to have me contact them about a television project they were planning. After a few phone calls, they offered to fly me to New York City to

meet with Cronkite. I wanted to bring Jenny, but I knew that wouldn't be appropriate or even practical.

On a cool New York day in late September of 1973, I found myself back in the Big Apple and sitting down to an informal lunch with Walter Cronkite. For me, it just didn't get better than that and it was hard to avoid being a bit overwhelmed by the experience. It wasn't about being star-struck. Like most regular visitors to New York City, I was used to occasionally seeing celebrities out and about around town.

I remember walking through the theater district in Manhattan early one morning during the mid-1970s. Richard Burton got out of a car five feet in front me. I stared; he smiled, waved and quickly disappeared into the back door of a theater where he was appearing in Equus. Thanks to my father's connections, I had also met and talked with various actors and performers like Mickey Rooney, Dean Martin, Jack Benny, Phyllis Diller, The Association, Wayne Newton and many others.

I was surprised at how quickly the legendary reporter put me at ease. He had a gentle and laid-back manner that made me feel like we had known each other for years. I guess that was his gift and the thing that made Walter Cronkite such a successful news anchor. I appreciated the way he spoke with me as an equal, rather then treating me like some stupid kid.

As we lunched, Cronkite seemed honestly interested in my UFO investigations and articles. He was particularly interested in my articles about the government cover-up. He kept asking my questions about the UFO stories I heard from my father and his pilot friends, as well as the pool incident. Then he dropped the bomb.

After about thirty minutes of conversation and a brief explanation of what CBS was planning for their UFO report, Cronkite said to

me, "Let me tell you my UFO story." For the next few minutes, I sat in stunned silence as he told me what had happened.

During the 1950s (I felt that he was being purposely vague about the exact date or year), Cronkite was part of a small pool of news reporters brought out to a tiny South Pacific island to watch the test of a new Air Force missile. After a short inspection of the missile system by the reporters, they were lead to an area that was a safe distance from the launch site.

The missile was mounted on a specially built launcher that was attached to a cement base. It was obvious that the area had been rapidly constructed just for this occasion. The details about the missile were going to be given to the reporters verbally before the test and in the form of handout sheets and press releases afterward.

Cronkite mentioned that he and the other reporters had been warned that photography of the missile test and any audio transmissions or recordings by the press was forbidden. Just as the test was ready to proceed, everyone was writing as fast as they could while an officer blurted out some prepared details about the new weapons system.

As Air Police walked around the perimeter of the test area with guard dogs, the missile was fired-up. Just as it was about to be released, a large disc-type UFO appeared on the scene. The disc hovered about 30 feet off the ground. As the Air Police and their dogs ran toward the object, it shot out a blue beam of light that struck the missile, one of the Air Policeman and a dog all at the same time.

The missile was frozen in mid-air about 70 feet from the launcher as it took off. One Air Policeman was frozen in mid-step. A dog was frozen in mid-air as it jumped and barked at the disc. Cronkite reminded me that this all happened within the space of about five

minutes or less.

Without sharing any personal observations or feelings about the appearance of the object, Cronkite matter-of-factly stated that he guessed the object might have been about 50-60 feet in diameter, a dull gray color and had no distinguishing markings or visible means of propulsion. Because of the background noise generated by the missile engine and sudden flurry of activity, he couldn't tell whether the disc made any noise. He did not notice any coming directly from the object.

Without any warning, the missile suddenly exploded and the disc vanished after that. The Air Policeman and his dog looked alright, but were quickly taken away by medical personnel. Shortly afterward, Air Police moved into the area were the reporters were standing and quickly ushered them into a nearby concrete observation bunker and control center.

After about thirty minutes of sitting in that small building, the reporters were escorted back out into the open air again and addressed by an Air Force Colonel. The officer told them, "It was all part of the test." Obviously making it up as he went along, the Colonel said that the event was "staged" to test media reaction to UFOs.

After trying to explain the whole thing away, the officer made the usual self-serving statements which included the Air Force belief that Flying Saucers were probably not of extraterrestrial origin. Instead, they were probably misidentified aircraft or secret planes being tested by the Air Force. But he also reminded the reporters that all of that had nothing to with the incident they just witnessed.

The Colonel told them that the test was all about showing the media how "shocking" it could be to suddenly view a new technology. It was designed to explain why most people would

assume they were looking at alien spacecrafts if they saw a new type of aircraft built in a non-conventional shape.

The explanation made all the sense in the world, but Cronkite would have none of it. He was certain that what he viewed was a new technology, but he was also sure it was not an Earthly one. He didn't believe the Air Force explanation then, and he still didn't believe it at the time he told me the story.

Before leaving the group, the Colonel told the reporters that they could not say anything about the test. That seemed to defeat the whole purpose of it and I am sure that Cronkite wondered how he was supposed to tell people that the UFOs they were seeing were government aircraft when he couldn’t say anything about the new government technology he was alleged to have witnessed.

I was sure that Cronkite felt safe telling me about his experience. After all, I was just a kid interested in UFOs and who would listen to me? I was also sure it was his own personal revenge on the military for preventing him from releasing the story of the century. He knew I was likely to remain interested in the subject and would tell his story at some point in my life, and here I am doing that so many years later.

Being a very private person, Walter Cronkite never did share his own beliefs about UFOs with me. He just told me his UFO story and allowed me to draw my own conclusions from that. Since he didn’t believe the object that appeared during the missile test was something the government cooked up or that it had been made on earth, I guess I can assume he believed it was made elsewhere. Either way, I’ll just let the story stand on its own and allow you to take from it what you will just as he did when he told it to me.

I probably could have asked a million questions after Cronkite told me the story, but I got the impression that our meeting was over

and wasn't about to challenge America's most famous News Anchor. Instead, I was deeply appreciative of his willingness to tell me a story that I was certain few, people outside of his family had probably heard.

The CBS UFO Project turned into a less than memorable Special that was filmed shortly after my meeting with Cronkite. I was included in it for just a few minutes. During the filming, I became aware that Cronkite had not shared his story with any of the other UFO investigators or witnesses. I gleaned that from the fact that none of them discussed it among themselves, with me or even mentioned it in passing.

After the special aired, I called one of Cronkite's staff members and asked him if he had ever heard the UFO story. He told me he had, but I am not sure about that. I think he was probably an over-worked intern just trying to get me off the phone and didn't have a clue what I was talking about. Either way, Cronkite's UFO story was certainly not covered or even mentioned in the Special. I've only met a few people over the years that knew about it and they probably heard it the same way I did, right from the horse's mouth.

When I returned from New York, everyone at school had questions about my meeting with Walter Cronkite. I really wanted to tell them about his UFO story, but I felt it would be inappropriate at that time and I doubt anyone would have believed me. Instead, I gave an interview to the school newspaper and described my involvement in the UFO Special and how thrilled I was to meet and lunch with Walter Cronkite.

The New York trip, the meeting with Cronkite, the angel encounter with Jenny, senior year pressures and everything else happening in my life began to take a toll on me. I felt physically and mentally exhausted. The only thing keeping me going at that point was

Jenny. She was the glue that held me together.

Although she was busy with student government responsibilities, social obligations and the UFO Club, Jenny always made time for me. We ate lunch together almost every day and enjoyed quiet conversations afterward in the tropical garden sitting area next to the Lunch Room. It was in that setting that the angel returned with a message for me. While I was talking with Jenny, she abruptly stopped speaking.

"Bill, it's me and I have something to tell you." The voice of the angel was almost the same as Jenny's, but had a more serious tone to it. It knew I would recognize the tone, so no further explanations were necessary. Like the other people that heard the angel's voice, I do not recall exactly what was said after that. The gist of the message was that my father would not be alive much longer and the rest was meant to be a comforting message.

I already knew that my father was dying, so the message came as no great surprise. When I called the resort after my conversation with Jenny, they told me that he had fallen ill at work and been taken to the hospital. By the time I got there, he was gone. We had already said as much as any father and son could say to each other, so there were no regrets. Neither of us would have wanted a long, emotional goodbye.

The way I looked at it, my father brought me into this world and took care of me while he was here. What more could I ask and what more could be said. My mother took it harder than I did, but that was to be expected. They had been together for almost thirty years. You can just put that behind you in a few days, weeks or even months.

Despite her grief, my mother stepped up to the plate and took care of everything. I tried to help where I could, but had my own pressures to deal with. My Senior Year experience was turning into

an exhausting, confusing and emotionally draining mess of odd incidents and constant stress.

With all this going on there was something else going through my mind. Maybe it was just my way of being distracted from grief, but I wondered how Jenny knew that my father was going to die. I didn‘t even recall telling her that he was sick. She only met him twice and that was when he appeared to be in good health.

My father’s funeral was military. His friends and our family members came from all over the country to attend. It was yet another exhausting experience. My mother held up during the event and subsequent aftermath of legalities, but she soon collapsed and had to take a leave of absence from work.

I wanted to help my mother cope with everything, but I could barely cope myself. I learned that there was simply no quick resolution to grief. It had to work itself out over time. Unfortunately, I didn’t have the time to spare. I needed to get back on the horse and keep my grades up. Although my future plans were still in limbo, the last thing I needed was to flunk out.

One of my mother’s close friends was a gal named Jessie that she met at work. She was single, younger than my mother and looked at her as a mentor. Jessie was a huge help before, during and after the funeral. She eventually moved in with my mother and that gave me the chance to move out.

Jessie and I got along just fine, but I knew that if I didn’t get out at that moment, I would be stuck there. My mother could be the ultimate prophet of doom when she wanted to be and I just couldn’t cope with her moods or sermonizing. I needed a break and the settlement of my father’s life insurance policy was my key to getting it.

Armed with that extra cash and the speaking fees that I

occasionally earned, I began the search for a new place to live with my mother's blessing and her promise to co-sign my lease. She understood how I felt and was all for independence. I looked at a few apartments, but no one wanted to rent to a seventeen year old that was still in high school.

Jenny, Mary Ann and Bob came to my rescue. They found a two bedroom house for rent in a residential neighborhood on St Pete Beach. The house was originally supposed to be a seasonal rental, but the owner got tired of cleaning up messes and making repairs due to unruly tourists. He knew Jenny's dad and her father kindly vouched for my character.

The rental house was perfect. It was affordable, centrally located and already furnished. My mother and I signed the lease, I paid a few months in advance and moved in. It felt strange living by myself, but all those years of my parents working crazy hours and almost never being home had prepared me for the experience.
My friends, The Colonel, Mary Ann's family and Jenny's parents all came over for a house warming on the first weekend after I moved in. The event was held on Saturday afternoon and we all enjoyed each other's company. People talked a lot about the generation gap in those days and I know it existed, but it was nice to see that when you gave people a chance, they could get along regardless of age.

Saturday evening belonged to Jenny, Mary Ann, Bob and me. I needed to kick off the funk that I was feeling, so we all went out. After a stop at the bowling alley to exhibit our pitiful bowling skills, we went roller skating and then stopped for a snack at Ted Peters Smoked Fish in South Pasadena. We finished the evening with a quiet walk along the beach.

Sunday belonged to Jenny and me. She came over in the late morning and laughed when she saw me cutting the lawn with a big

straw hat on. I looked like Huckleberry Finn. After I finished, she watched TV while I showered and dressed. We didn't go out right away, but sat and talked for a while.

I hadn't told Jenny about the latest angel visitation and decided this would be a good time to do so now that the dust was finally settling from my father's death and my move into the rental house. She wasn't surprised and had become used to that sort of thing. I was surprised and still a little frightened at how used to it I became.

As the holiday season approached, I knew that I had to make some tough decisions. Jenny was already accepted into a university for the following school year and I could see our lives moving off into different directions. I doubted that I could afford college and didn't have the grades for any sort of a scholarship. In truth, I was sick of school and knew that I wasn't in the proper mindset for higher education at that point anyway.

I hated to do it, but I needed to sit down with Bob and Mary Ann to discuss some of my concerns and seek advice. I told them how I felt about my life and my relationship with Jenny. Needless to say, I didn't mention anything about the angel visitations. They were a bit surprised, but understood how I felt. They were probably as confused and disoriented as I was, but had more stable family lives to draw on for support.

Bob was starting college himself next fall and Mary Ann was planning on working in her parent's office for a year while she thought about what she wanted to do with her life. They already worked things out because he was attending a local school, so they didn't really have any advice to offer. However, it still felt good to get some of the concerns I had and the pressures I felt off of my chest.

My mother was the kind of person that spent her whole life being the strong one and caring for other people. I know a lot of that rubbed off on me for better or worse. It made me unselfish, but also cost me a lot of opportunities. One of them was Jenny. After weighing our relationship against all the circumstances that would place pressure on it during the coming year, I knew that staying with her would hold her back. I had good reason for being concerned about relationships. The paranormal had surrounded me for as long as I could remember. Not only had people involved with it been drawn to me and I to them, but I already had my own experiences with supernatural forces and the unexplained. For example, I had been slightly precognitive and occasionally sensitive to what other's were thinking for as long as I could remember.

An incident that occurred on a family vacation to Florida in 1966 illustrates my ability to experience precognition. I was ten years old at the time and we were staying in a Fort Lauderdale hotel, just across the street from the beach. While that location is in the Bermuda Triangle, the only strange thing that happened to me during the first few days of our vacation was waking up in the morning to find Spring Break college students passed out in front of the door to our efficiency apartment.

Near the end of our first week, my parents got a call from the front desk. The hotel was offering free Bahamas weekend trips to guests. The trip included two days and one night free at a hotel, plus a luxurious charter flight to and from the Islands. The purpose was to get people there for gambling. Although my folks weren't big on gambling, they thought the trip might be fun and made reservations for the last weekend of our vacation.

I knew about the upcoming Bahamas excursion, but didn't give it much thought. I was having too much fun at the hotel. It wasn't

until a few days before the flight that I began to feel strange about it. I always had a bit of a sixth sense. I would hear a song playing in my head before turning on the radio, and then the song would be on the radio. I would start thinking about a certain movie or a favorite episode of some TV series and it would be on when I started watching.

The view of the Atlantic Ocean from the second floor balcony of the main hotel building was spectacular. I used the binocular viewers attached to the railing to watch ships on the horizon and look at people trying to surf. I laughed as inexperienced surfers constantly fell off their boards and got creamed by the waves. The sun hurt my eyes so my favorite time to view the ocean was during early evening. It was quiet and the sound of waves crashing on the shore was very soothing. The boats were all lighted up and I liked counting them as they came and went.

Two days before the Bahamas trip I was looking out at the ocean just before dark. The calm that I usually felt was suddenly replaced by a troubled feeling. Although I couldn't put my finger on it at the time, I knew that something was just not right. I went back to our efficiency and changed into my bathing suit. My parents were already at the hotel pool, so I joined them there hoping to shake off the bad vibes.

By the next morning, I chalked up the previous night's experience to being out in the sun too long that day or just exhaustion. It was Spring Break, but even at that time of year temperatures in South Florida were very high. Tourists like myself from cold states really felt that heat during the first few days in the sunshine state.

Despite my attempts to brush off the previous evening's funk as nothing, the feeling returned in force after my folks mentioned the Bahamas trip around mid-morning. When I thought about going on the flight, I felt dread. When I thought about not going, I felt

peace. I didn’t want to upset my parents, but these were feelings that I couldn’t ignore any longer.

Instead of going to the beach with my parents that morning, I opted to stay in and watch television. After baking in the sun for a couple of hours, my parents came in for lunch. While we were eating, I wondered how to tell them that I didn’t feel right about the Bahamas trip. While I was still thinking about that, my mother asked me if I was all ready for the upcoming flight. I answered, “I don't want to go to the Bahamas.”

My statement was simple, direct and honest, but my folks were shocked. It was completely unlike me to be so defiant. Despite their best efforts to change my mind, I told them that I would rather stay at the hotel with a babysitter than go on that flight. They couldn’t understand my attitude and were very upset with me.

As memory serves, the flight was scheduled for late Friday morning. My parents spent the next day and a half still trying to change my mind. I swore that I wouldn’t get on that plane and warned them that if they tried to make me get on board, I would cause a scene that would win me an Oscar. That got me grounded to the room for next two days, but I didn’t care.

Friday morning came around and my parents finally gave up. My father called the front desk early that morning to cancel our reservations for the flight. They spent the rest of the day reminding me how much I screwed up their vacation and ruined our chances to see the Bahamas for free. Their taunts continued until the late afternoon. A call came from the front desk that seemed upsetting to my father, but he didn’t say anything about it.

Despite my actions of the past several days, I was suddenly allowed to go to the hotel game room on Friday evening while my parents took a stroll on the beach. The room was located just off

the main lobby. When I got there, I was surprised to find that it was empty. There were usually kids all over the place. Since it was near the dinner hour, I figured that everyone was busy eating.

While I was playing pinball, I noticed that there was a lot of activity near the front desk. The hotel phones rang ceaselessly and people kept stopping by to ask questions. They were all very upset about something, but I couldn't tell what it was. When the police arrived and started talking to everyone, I thought that something bad happened and curiosity got the best of me.

I sat down in a chair right next to the front desk and pretended to be reading some tourist brochures. After listening to the conversations for a short while, I figured out what happened. The charter plane carrying those who went on the weekend trip to the Bahamas was missing. Despite perfect flying weather and no reports of mechanical problems, the authorities believed that it crashed into the ocean.

The missing aircraft was carrying passengers that were guests at a number of area hotels. Eight of the passengers had been staying at our hotel. The announcement about the missing plane was made on the local evening news broadcast. That explained why everyone was upset, in somber moods and absent from most of the hotel activity centers including the game room. I missed that broadcast, but heard people talking about it.

When I returned to our efficiency apartment, I turned on the television and waited for the late news broadcast to find out more about the missing plane. In the mean time, my parents came home. I told them what happened, but found out that they already knew. The call to our room that afternoon was from the front desk. They told my father about the missing aircraft and wanted to confirm that we hadn't boarded that flight. That explained why I was no longer grounded.

Neither of my folks had much to say about happened. The whole thing freaked them out as much as it did me. I can't explain what happened or why I didn't want to get on that plane. Thinking about

it reminds me of any number of stories I've heard about people obeying a sense of impending doom. They purposely miss a flight or decide not to go out and it saves their lives.

I can't say whether the missing aircraft event was caused by the Bermuda Triangle or not, but I can say that obeying my precognitive urge not to fly saved my life and the lives of my parents. Despite my best efforts to explain what I experienced away with science, coincidence or a closer examination of the facts, life kept throwing things in my face that were a little stranger then my ability to fully understand them and this was one of those things.

My slightly precognitive nature was occasionally upsetting or even annoying to me, but it was my ability to occasionally sense the feelings or moods of others that was a real problem. That sensitivity made it difficult for me to maintain a stable and productive mindset. It held me back from doing things I wanted to do and I knew it would spell disaster for any long-term relationship I had with someone as together as Jenny. She deserved better.

Chapter Five
Jenny, Mary Ann, Chef Bob, Denise, Bruce The Moose and Louise

After I moved into the rental house, the strange got even stranger. It started with my plans to break up with Jenny. Christmas vacation was two weeks of non-stop craziness. Jenny, Mary Ann, Bob and I visited each others houses and parents. We exchanged gifts and went out a lot. By the time Christmas Eve arrived, I found myself spending it with Jenny and that included some time with her parents. Things were not exactly going as planned.

That Christmas Eve started normally enough. My grandmother was still in the nursing home, but was allowed a home visit since this

would probably be her last Christmas. Her sister (my aunt) came to visit and they all stayed at my mother‘s house. Some of Jessie’s family came over and it turned into a nice holiday for my mother. Jenny and I stopped by for a brief visit before heading back to her place.

Jenny’s parents owned a small horse farm with a big house. Like Jenny, everything there was perfect. The more I looked around, the more I realized that I just didn’t belong in that family circle. My life wasn’t perfect and never would be. Despite my pessimistic feelings, we had a nice time visiting with Jenny’s parents. They were wonderful people, but I became so used to being alone on holidays that I wanted Jenny all to myself for the rest of the evening. I planned a late evening dinner for us at a new restaurant that opened near downtown St Petersburg and hoped that would provide an opportunity for me to discuss our future as a couple.

One of my many faults was that I was a bit old fashioned when it came to dating. I hated guys that dragged a girl out of her house for roller skating, and then used their car as a motel room. It was tacky and something I refused to do. Instead, I felt that a guy should have enough respect for himself and his date to offer her a nice evening of entertaining things to do and interesting conversation. After that, whatever happened did so by mutual consent and tended to be followed by good, rather than bad, memories and feelings.

The new restaurant was fabulous. It was a very large old house that was renovated into a bistro by a local chef on the fast track to fame. The holiday decorations were tasteful and live music filled the air. The food choices were original and delicious. Jenny was thrilled with my choice for our Christmas Eve Dinner and we both had a terrific time. I could see this wasn’t the time to discuss any sort of romantic break-up, so I didn’t bring up the subject of our

future together.

The Chef's was a guy I'll call Bob D. He placed a 'comments' box by the entrance, so I dropped in a note thanking him for a wonderful meal and enjoyable time at his eatery. As requested, I added my name and phone number. I knew it was probably a marketing ploy to get people back, but I intended to go there again anyway. At Jenny's suggestion, I added a question: "Is your restaurant haunted?"

Our next stop was a Christmas Concert at her church and on to a Christmas Party for young people being sponsored by a local charity at a downtown hotel. We danced, took part in some wacky games they cooked up as part of the event and had a great time. Jenny probably thought I was crazy because we spent most of Christmas Eve out and about, but it had been years since I had a real family Christmas.

One or both of my folks were gone for the last several Christmases, so I started going out when I was old enough to do so. It beat sitting around watching old Christmas movies and feeling depressed. I can see that Jenny didn't have that problem. Her parents were always there, older siblings dropped by when they could and other relatives as well. That just wasn't my experience at Christmastime.

It was already after midnight when we left the downtown Christmas Party. Jenny and I were walking back to the car when my new best friend made an appearance. Without warning, the Angel spoke through her. Although I don't recall the exact words, it told me that Jenny needed me and that now wasn't a good time to end our relationship. Once again I found myself floored at how much this creature knew about my private thoughts.

Christmas Day was uneventful. I stopped by to see Jenny and most

of the others in my small circle of close friends to wish them a Merry Christmas and headed back to my rental house. Jenny was going away for the week between Christmas and New Years with her family, so I caught up on some overdue letter writing and worked on a few articles I had promised for some UFO newsletters.

After a couple of days of working on various articles and cleaning up my place, I got cabin fever and went over to see The Colonel. It was a few days after Christmas and he was in a good mood. We had one of the best conversations I can recall. He talked about the time when he and my dad were in Australia with MacArthur during the early months of the World War II. Despite the wartime circumstances, those were the best of times for them.

The Australians were grateful to have the Americans there and always treated by dad and The Colonel with great respect. The two friends loved salt water fishing and decided to go out on a charter boat during their first weekend pass. They went down to the docks, found one of the few charters still operating during those days and tried to hire it. The captain took them out, but refused to take their money.

Despite his refusal to charge them for anything, The Colonel and my dad insisted on fueling up his boat when they returned to the dock. With strict fuel rationing in place, that was a wonderful way to say ‘Thank You’ for a great day of fishing on the ocean. My dad and The Colonel told that story often over the years and it gave me a wonderful fondness for the Australian People.

I didn’t want to take advantage of the unusually pleasant and casual manner of conversation that The Colonel and I were enjoying at that time, but curiosity got the best of me and I decided to go for broke. “My father never said much about his wartime experiences,” I began, “but he did mention MacArthur’s interest in

the Foo Fighters. I wonder if you might be able to fill in the blanks on the report he ordered."

I told The Colonel what my father said about MacArthur's Foo Fighter report and waited. The Colonel suddenly became very serious and said something like, "I know that you believe I have the lowdown on this Foo Fighter report, but I don't. Your father and I collected intelligence reports and pilot debriefing documents. We didn't have time to read most of them and that wasn't our job. We were assigned to gather information, assemble it into a report and deliver all those materials to the General (MacArthur). That's what we did."

Although it wasn't a smoking gun, it was affirmation that the report existed and that The Colonel and my father really did participate in its preparation. I felt a bit guilty after bringing up the subject. I know that talking about it made The Colonel feel uncomfortable. However, it wasn't the first or last time that I would make people with important information feel uncomfortable in order to get at the truth about UFOs.

As I was leaving The Colonel's house, I saw Mary Ann. She was sitting on the porch in front of her house. I waved to her and she came running over to me. Her parents were involved in some big remodeling job and she felt uncomfortable being home alone. After explaining that she could only stand so much time with The Colonel, Mary Ann asked if she could come over to my place for a while.

Although I wasn't opposed to her visit, I was concerned. Bob and Mary Ann seemed to be spending less time together as a couple and more time with Jenny and me as friends. I didn't want to do anything to upset the apple cart. I was already confused enough about my life and relationship with Jenny. The last thing I needed was for those nasty raging teenage hormones to kick in again and

cause a rift between all four of us.

It was always hard for me to say ‘No’ to Mary Ann. As I have said previously, she was a force of nature. She was sweet, smart and cute like Jenny, but Mary Ann had a way of legitimizing all of her requests and making you feel guilty if you didn’t do what she wanted. It was that very nature that scared the daylights out of me. I know that if she decided that we should be together as more than friends, getting out of that situation would be almost impossible.

Mary Ann ran back into her house and called her parents. She told them that she would be spending the rest of the day and evening with me. She also called The Colonel and told him the same. Mary Ann finally emerged from her house after about fifteen minutes with a big gym bag. She jumped into my car and told me that she brought a bathing suit and a change of clothes in case we decided to go to the beach. I was fine with that, but still feeling a bit uneasy about the whole thing.

Mary Ann was no freeloader. We stopped at a supermarket on the way to my house and she bought all kinds of food to cook for dinner. She also bought a bunch of make-up and some other stuff. Ever since she began working part-time in her parent’s office, Mary Ann always had lots of money to spend. Her dad said that she earned every penny and was a natural when it came to phone work and sales.

By the time we arrived at my house, I felt slightly more comfortable about having her over. I have to admit that it was nice to be spending time with Mary Ann again. I missed the conversations we used to have about her life and paranormal experiences. It was difficult to carry on those kinds of discussions with Bob and Jenny around. I got the impression that it made Bob and Jenny anxious and that was the last thing I wanted to do.

New Year's Eve was just a few days away and I wondered how Mary Ann and her family would be celebrating. She told me that her parents were finally taking some time off to enjoy themselves. They would be closing up the office tomorrow and heading out for a romantic getaway. When I asked what Mary Ann what she would be doing for New Years, she said, "Spending it with you!"

I should have been upset, but the thought of spending New Years with my mother and her friend was not really appealing to me. Jessie was nice, but her family had a tendency to be annoying at times and I just wasn't in the mood for that kind of socializing. I also wasn't in the frame of mind to be alone. I would just have to do my best to keep things as casual and friendly as possible.

Although I had no problem with spending New Year's Eve with Mary Ann, I hadn't yet grasped the entirety of her statement. I assumed that she meant that we would spend New Year's Eve together and perhaps part of New Year's Day. I was in for a big surprise and one that I really didn't need at that time.

Mary Ann cooked an excellent meal that evening and we enjoyed a long conversation. She told me how that she had been visited again. That bothered me, but I knew the experience was a part of her life and that there was very little that any of us could do about it. She recalled very little about the visitation, but I noticed some bruising on her leg and asked about it.

She told me to wait and went into the bathroom with her duffle bag. She emerged in her two piece swim suit. Mary Ann immediately showed me some odd-looking scratch marks on her shoulder, back and just under her left breast area. I quickly took note of those and saw that she was concerned about the marks. It brought back memories of the boys with missing time and we discussed that case for a while as well.

While it was no strain on my eyes to watch her sitting on my couch in her swimsuit, I caught myself staring at her a few times and suggested that she go and dress in something more appropriate for our conversation. She understood and went back in my bathroom to dress. When she came out again, she had on shorts and a halter top. I could see and feel her force of will at work in my life.

Mary Ann got my attention, but there was no way I was going to give in to her and screw everything up that I hadn't already screwed up. Instead, I worked my objections into our conversation. I explained how that both of us were experiencing things that made our lives unstable. People needed stability and when you put together two people that both have so many issues to deal with, it just tends to destroy any chance for either of them to enjoy a normal relationship.

I knew she got the point, but Mary Ann played 'coy' very well and acted as though she didn't know what I was talking about. She even had me second guessing myself. After awhile I wondered if I had read too much into the bathing suit and halter top with shorts incidents. Maybe it was all just a misunderstanding. After all, she could easily date and get involved with anyone that she wanted to and I wasn't exactly the best catch.

After a pleasant dinner and a few hours of somewhat confusing conversation, we headed over to the resort where my father used to work. They had a heated pool and the weather was warm enough to go swimming. I had a standing invitation to use their facilities at any time and occasionally took advantage of that. While we were there, I sensed that Mary Ann desperately wanted to talk with me about something important, but she remained silent about it.

As the night wore on, the air felt chilly, so we cut our swimming pool visit short and headed back to my house. Mary Ann dressed

and I decided it would be a good idea to take her home before it got too late. It was then that she admitted that she had told her folks and The Colonel that she would be staying at my place until after New Years. I could hardly believe my ears and wondered how she wrangled permission out of her folks and The Colonel to stay at my place.

She had done this before when Jenny and Bob stayed over, but I doubted that her parents or the Colonel knew it would just be the two of us. I should have expected this, but it still caught me off-guard. I agreed without sounding too excited about the whole thing, but I knew this was not a good idea. It was times like these that made me thankful that I had a spare bedroom.

Mary Ann wasted no time placing her stuff in the unused bedroom. I changed into dry clothes and by the time I reached the washer and dryer, she was already in the small utility room located just off the kitchen. She took my bathing suit and threw it in the washer with hers. Looking at Mary Ann doing the wash in shorts and a tee shirt reminded me how easy she was on the eye and I knew that it would be an uphill struggle to remain 'just friends' during the next several days.

I decided to try and keep things casual by playing some tunes. My pals at Radio Shack had set me up with an excellent stereo system for a fair price. I put on a record and sat in the living room listening to some Steely Dan while Mary Ann did the wash and finished putting away her clothes into draws in the spare bedroom.

When she finally sat down with me, Mary Ann got a serious look on her face. It was a look that I had never seen before and I wondered what was coming next. She asked if we could talk and I turned off the stereo. Mary Ann dropped a bomb on me by saying she had been pregnant. I was upset, but since we had never had any physical relations, I was also relieved that I wasn't one of the

parties under consideration as the daddy.

Before I could say anything, Mary Ann blew me away again. She swore that she never had any sexual relations with Bob or anyone else. In her own unabashed and outgoing way, she explained how that she had necked a lot and fooled around with Bob in her underwear, but neither of them had ever done anything that involved any kind of sex. Bob was pretty religious and would have none of that.

I didn't know what to say and reminded her that most girls didn't get pregnant without a sex partner. She again swore that she had never had sex with anyone and that Bob was the only guy that she ever allowed to even touch her in a sensual way. This was the ultimate paranormal puzzle, but not one I would have chosen to try and solve if I had a choice.

Mary Ann went on to say that she missed her period over four months ago. It was before Bob and her really got serious as a couple. She was afraid to mention it to her folks knowing they would think the worst and hoped that her period might kick in the following month. It didn't and she missed two more periods. She finally went to a free clinic for a health exam and they gave her a pregnancy test. It came back positive, but she could not imagine how she could possibly be pregnant.

Shortly after the pregnancy test, Mary Ann had a visit from the little creatures. She told me that this encounter was different. She never remembered much about her experiences with the small beings, but this time she recalled almost everything. They came into her room late at night and managed to float her out of the house through a window.

Her next memory was of being inside a brightly lit environment. She had no idea where she was and didn't recall being taken on

board any sort of craft, but Mary Ann was laying naked on what she said might have been a table. One of the small creatures approached her with some kind of a stick. He moved it towards her and she became stiff.

A large funnel-looking device was lowered until it sat a few inches above her body. The thing started vibrating and caused her immense pain in the lower abdomen part of her body. She lost consciousness during that time. When she awoke, the creatures were returning her to her bedroom through the window. A few minutes later, she found herself sitting on the edge of her bed.

The creatures were gone, her windows were closed and Mary Ann felt very strange. The next morning she got her period. Concerned about what happened, she went back to the free clinic later that day and took another pregnancy test. After it turned out negative, she asked for a full examination. After the exam, the doctor talked to her like she was some kind of an idiot.

He explained that she was still a virgin and that women that hadn't lost their virginity were unlikely to be pregnant. She assumed he thought she was the one village idiot who, at seventeen years of age, hadn't yet heard the story of the birds and the bees. Either way, the clinic workers figured that her first test had been botched or accidentally switched with someone else's and apologized to Mary Ann.

I didn't really know what to say and was still pondering her story when my phone rang. Talk about being saved by the bell! I was surprised to find Chef Bob on the line. He had been trying to call me at various times for the past couple of days. Sadly, there were no consumer level answering machines yet available back then.

After a polite conversation about his wonderful restaurant, he wondered why I asked if his place was haunted on the comment

card. I said it was at the suggestion of Jenny who was always very sensitive to things like that and explained how both of us were involved with paranormal research. I was more than a little surprised when he told me that there had been several unusual incidents in his restaurant since the place opened.

With little to do over the next few days, I offered to come over the following day. Chef Bob was fine with that even after I reminded him that I was just a teenager with an interest in UFOs and the paranormal. That didn't matter to him. He saw me on the George Michelle Show and felt I was knowledgeable enough to deal with his situation. Chef Bob was also young and couldn't have been more than twenty-four years old at that time.

Mary Ann heard my phone conversation and asked what was going on. I told her about Chef Bob and asked if she wanted to go with me the next day. She was thrilled with the idea and I knew it would be a great way to take some of the pressure off everything that was happening in both our lives. If she was thinking about ghosts, she wouldn't be thinking about dating me.

I confessed my inability to explain what happened regarding her pregnancy. I suggested that perhaps the beings had somehow impregnated her, than removed the fetus. By that time there were already a few UFO researchers that believed that Aliens possessed the technology to do that. And there was always the possibility that they removed the fetus when it was mature enough to be developed outside of a human body.

No one was publicly talking about anything like cloning much in those days, but some researchers believed that aliens were using humans to strengthen their own faltering DNA. It was possible they were either trying to develop genetic material made of stronger DNA that could be implanted into their own reproductive process, or birth hybrids that combined the DNA or Aliens and

Humans to help their race to survive.

What Mary Ann described wasn't a typical alien kidnapping, or at least most of the victims in those days tended to leave out any sorted details about matters involving pregnancies or sex when talking about their encounters. While I was certain she hadn't made it up, I also wondered if it could have been a scenario that had been implanted in her mind. Either way, I hoped she wasn't trying to use it to make some sort of connection with me.

After talking about the pregnancy for a while, we watched television for a couple of more hours and went to sleep in our separate bedrooms. I was glad that Mary Ann hadn't made any real plays for me that evening. Before going to sleep I just kept thinking about how this latest incident illustrated how tough it was for anyone experiencing the unexplained, or those that knew them, to live a normal life.

Sleep never came easy for me, but when it did I fell hard. I slept through the night and didn't wake up until after nine the next morning. I was an early riser and that was unusual for me. I guessed that my body and mind needed the extra sleep. Mary Ann was already up and reading a book. When I came out, she offered to make breakfast and I welcomed the suggestion.
It might have been because I was an only child and had just a small circle of close friends, but I valued friendship above everything including physical relationships. I knew that a lot of the feelings that Mary Ann, Jenny and I were feeling had more to do with changes we were all going through than anything else.

Anything that happened between us would probably not last and I didn't want our friendships to end over some brief fling. Feeling I had already made the mistake of getting too deeply involved with Jenny, I didn't want to make the same mistake with Mary Ann.

After breakfast, Mary Ann and I headed out to meet Chef Bob at his restaurant. It was mid-morning and the kitchen was already buzzing with activity as they got ready for the lunch crowd. Chef Bob greeted us and I introduced Mary Ann as a friend and member of the UFO Club. I explained that she had some unusual experiences of her own and would be helpful in getting to the bottom of anything strange that might be happening at his restaurant.

Chef Bob bought an old two story house that had an unfinished attic on the third floor and renovated it into his restaurant. The house was in a neighborhood that was part of the north side of downtown St Petersburg. The neighborhood was around eighty years old and many of the older homes had succumbed to their age. Most were owned by elderly residents that were unable to keep the huge homes up to snuff.

By the time that Chef Bob came along to look at the house, the area had been re-zoned for business and was experiencing commercial popularity due to nearby attractions and the proximity to downtown. Several of the older homes had already been renovated into small shops that extended the business section of the north side of downtown. Two others were demolished to provide space for a shared parking lot paid for by the city.

The house had a huge porch that wrapped itself around most of the structure and large windows throughout the inside. The windows looked out on to the porch and a large yard with a carefully manicured garden. Chef Bob did a masterful job of renovating the house into a bright and cheery eatery with inside and outside seating. It was hard to imagine that the place was troubled in any way.

As he took us through the restaurant, staff members were setting the tables for lunch. Chef Bob stopped to introduce us to a young

woman named Nancy. She had been working at the place since it opened in the early fall. Nancy was the Maitre d' and Hostess. She handled all the phone reservations and made sure that everyone was seated properly. Chef Bob managed to steal her away from a busy hotel restaurant in Tampa with an offer of better pay and benefits.

Nancy seemed like a very skeptical person. After speaking with her for a few minutes, I could tell she was not someone interested in the paranormal or metaphysical. The twenty-two year old was all about making money and learning the restaurant business. That made it all the stranger to hear her talk about the odd experiences that she had in the restaurant.

Nancy came to work for Chef Bob two weeks before his restaurant opened. After establishing a reputation for himself at another restaurant at the opposite end of St Petersburg, the opening of his own restaurant was eagerly anticipated by his fans and reservation requests were already pouring in. That made the Chef very happy because he had taken everything he had and invested it into this venture. Looking at the restaurant immediately revealed that he had spared no expense when it came to ambiance and table settings. It really was a show place!

As workers put the finishing touches on the kitchen and dining areas, Nancy worked out of a small office near the front entrance to the restaurant. In addition to helping Chef Bob hire the serving staff for his new eatery, she also handled what seemed like an endless stream of phone calls from prospective employees and people wanting reservations. The word had gotten out quickly after he made a couple of appearances on local TV news and information shows.

Nancy showed us the small office which was well lit by daylight that streamed in from a stained glass window situated high in the

wall that faced outside. The stained glass window featured a sail boat and regular glass around the outside. Overall, the office had a nice atmosphere. Despite the cheery interior, Nancy told us that she kept hearing strange noises in that room.

The problems began with what sounded like ‘bumps’ against the outside and inside walls and ceiling. The inside walls faced the restaurant and the outside wall faced the porch. The rooms upstairs were for special occasions and were not being used when the noises were heard. For the first few days she was there, Nancy assumed that the noises came from workers completing work on the place. However, by the third day most of the workers were gone and the noises continued.

After bringing the matter to Chef Bob’s attention, he brought in the primary contractor that was in charge of the restaurant renovation. During the thirty or so minutes that they were in the small office, the threesome all heard the noises at least once. The contractor checked everything and found no reason for them. There was just nothing inside or outside of the building that could be making the noises.

To be sure there were no plumbing anomalies, the contractor brought in a plumbing inspector who went through the building and all the crawl spaces looking for any problems. He found none and the mystery remained unresolved. To add to the problem, Nancy noticed that the central air conditioning in the small office made it constantly freezing in there.

The contractor reminded Chef Bob and Nancy that the large windows in the building and often warm outside temperatures would tend to make the air conditioning work hard to keep the entire building cool. Some rooms would simply be cooler than others. Despite that explanation, it was fall and the outside temperature was moderate, not overly warm. Another place where

problems existed was on the second floor of the restaurant. That area had been cut into two large rooms designed for special functions and occasions. A small utility elevator for food and dishes had been installed in a tiny serving kitchen that existed in the back of a hallway that separated the two rooms. The elevator ran directly into the downstairs main kitchen.

On several occasions, Nancy went upstairs after hearing water running. The noise came from the cold water facet which was inexplicably turned on in the serving kitchen. This happened once a day, everyday, for the first week that Nancy worked at the new restaurant. Without a serving staff present and no workers on the second floor, it was hard to imagine what was causing the problem.

The plumbing inspector also checked out that problem and found no reason for the facet to be turned on. He was convinced that someone was turning it on to wash out something, and forgetting to turn it off when they were done. However, the upstairs was complete and no one went up there during that time.

No one would have any reason to use the upstairs serving kitchen. The kitchen had already been completed, cleaned and supplied. No restrooms were located on the second floor. Customers would have to come down the stairs and use the main restaurant rest rooms located behind the staircase. The only other access point on the second floor was a door on the opposite side of the hallway from the small serving kitchen. That doorway lead to the attic.

Chef Bob had the attic cleaned out and filled with small shelving units to store decorations and items that were not immediately needed. It was unfinished with a couple of fluorescent lights that were installed and an old wooden floor. No one went up there and there was nothing of any real value to attract unethical employees bent on thievery.

I knew from having been involved in ghost cases and reading a lot about ghost investigation that there were any number of reasons why water facets could appear to turn themselves on and off. I checked the facet and found that it closed tightly, didn't leak and was not especially easy to turn on or off.

While checking the facet, I noticed a couple of dark spots on the wall. The wall in the small kitchen was painted an off-white color. The spots appeared to be a green-yellow color. Despite having the wall repainted several times, the spots always came through. No one could explain the source of the spots.

The problems with the wall banging, wall spots, ice cold air in the office and facet turning itself on continued, although not as frequently as when the place first opened. A server named Joann came up with a unique solution. Much to skeptical Nancy's chagrin, Joann talked to the ghost which she was sure was haunting the place. She and another server regularly worked the private parties and events held upstairs.
While she was in the small upstairs serving kitchen, Joann regularly spoke to the ghost and asked it to stop causing trouble. The pleas seemed to work. The noises in the small office were heard far less frequently, the air temperature returned to normal and the facet rarely turned on by itself. The stains remained, but were little more than a distraction. However, when the noises did start it really upset the staff and was a constant irritation for Nancy.

As lunchtime approached, we didn't want to get into Chef Bob's way. Mary Ann and I sat outside on the porch and enjoyed sandwiches made by the restaurateur himself and discussed the situation. Mary Ann was as much at a loss to explain the odd events as I was. After we finished eating, I asked Chef Bob if he knew of anyone still in the neighborhood from the time when the original home owner lived in the house. He sent me to a small

boutique across the street.

The boutique was a quaint shop that sold all kinds of small collectible items. The shop took up the bottom floor of an old house similar to the one where Chef Bob now housed his restaurant. I could see this was an up and coming area as the shop was already buzzing with customers around noon. Chef Bob's presence in the area had certainly been good for everyone else's business as well.

Elsa was the owner of the boutique and house. She still lived upstairs. Now in her sixties, Elsa was born and grew up in the house that was originally purchased as a summer place by her folks. When I told her why we were there, she was remarkably understanding. Elsa knew the couple that once lived in Chef Bob's place. They purchased the house in the late 1930s from the original owners. Elsa told us that the couple sold the house because of some bad experiences they had there over the past few years.

Sometime around 1965 their son went off to college in another state. He returned to them three years later after flunking out. During his time away, their son became addicted to illegal drugs after becoming involved with users at the school. His addiction was so bad that doctors had him committed to a mental health treatment center for almost eight months.

When their son returned home to live with the couple in 1968, he was still a mess. He lived in a second floor room, but constantly retreated to the attic to use drugs. He frequently wet himself and Elsa felt that the stains of the walls might have come from his careless urination while up in the attic. She occasionally visited the couple and noticed the stains on the second floor walls that must have seeped down from the attic.

All the bedrooms had room air conditioners in them, so his parents

started locking him in his second floor room. When he was awake, he would frequently pound on the walls and floor of his bedroom to be let out. He finally forced the room air conditioner out of the window and climbed out on to the roof of the porch. Sadly, he fell off and broke his neck.

After their son died, the couple lost interest in the house and allowed it to fall into disrepair. They eventually decided to move and sold the house to Chef Bob. Although he had spent a small fortune to make the place one of St Petersburg's finest restaurants, he had no idea of the history behind the house. He met and conversed with Elsa, but she spared him the details of the son's death.

After driving down to the Pier, walking around and talking over the days events, we returned to Chef Bob's restaurant in mid-afternoon. By then lunch was over and the place was closed while everything was prepared for the dinner service. We took Chef Bob aside and told him the story we heard from Elsa. He was upset, but insisted that we tell Nancy.

Nancy was not really affected by the revelation about the death of the son of the former owners. She was naturally skeptical and was certain that there must be another explanation for the odd happenings in the restaurant. However, Chef Bob was convinced that we had discovered the nature of the problem and wondered what could be done about it.

Cases like this one really made me nervous. Despite my experience, I was still a relative new comer to ghost investigations and this one involved someone's business and reputation. Somehow I felt that it was less Jenny and more her Angelic alter ego that had suggested I ask if the place was haunted on that comment card. I was sure that the angel was probably off somewhere having a good laugh at my expense. Perhaps this was

how angels had fun?

I never felt more manipulated by the unseen world than I did at that particular time. It seemed like everything I did, everyone I dated and everything I got involved with was being influenced by forces working behind the scenes. It was maddening and I had more than enough of it. After giving it some thought, I decided to turn Chef Bob's ghost situation over to the Spiritualists I knew. Mary Ann agreed with me.

I received a call from Chef Bob shortly before New Year's Eve thanking me for sending the Spiritualists over. Whatever they did, it must have worked. On future visits to the restaurant I found a very happy Chef and a much relieved Nancy. I still wasn't sure whether we had actually investigated a haunting, but I was glad that what we did seemed to help.

Mary Ann and I went to the mall later that day to unwind. We stopped to visit a couple of friends that worked at a Pizza place, but Denise was the only one working that day. Like me, she was from New York and it was easy to tell by her accent. Her dad owned the Pizzeria. She hated working there, but made good tips. Like Mary Ann, Denise and her family were Irish. It had to be one of the few Irish pizza places around.

Mary Ann met Denise at school and she sat at our lunch table until transferring to another school earlier this year. Mary Ann kept in touch with her by phone and I occasionally visited her at the pizza place. She worked all the time and was an honor student. When she wasn't working, she was studying. Mary Ann and Denise's parents also knew each other.

Denise went on her break, sat down with us and took great pleasure in making fun of the fact that Mary Ann was staying over my house while her folks were away. Always edgy, she asked, "Got room for one more?" I got the joke, but Mary Ann was not

amused. Denise was a very good-looking, full-figured girl. Several serious offers to model had already come her way, but she turned them all down.

Just as we were about to leave, I saw an opportunity. I asked Denise if she wanted to hang out with us after work. She hadn't seen Mary Ann for a while and said she would like that. After all, school was out until after New Year's and I knew that Denise wanted to catch up with Mary Ann. It would give me a chance to get out from under Mary Ann's possible romantic initiatives.

We met Denise an hour later at the mall entrance and I drove her over to Jim's house. Jim (from our UFO Club) had caught Denise's eye some time ago, but the two hadn't really connected since she transferred to the other school. Unfortunately, Jim was away for the holidays. Despite that slight setback, Denise wasn't a third wheel. After all, Mary Ann and I were still just friends.

We went out to the beach and ran into a couple of kids we knew from school. Although Mary Ann and I didn't drink, Denise had no problem with downing a few beers now and again. On this occasion, she downed a whole bunch with the kids from school while Mary Ann and I walked up and down the beach. By the time we got back to her, Denise was almost unconscious. I found out that those idiots from school had spiked the beer with hard liquor.

This was a serious situation. If I brought Denise back to her parents like this, I would probably get the blame even though I didn't even drink. And I knew that Mary Ann's involvement would get back to her parents as well since the two families knew each other. Mary Ann and I walked Denise up and the beach until she threw up a few times.

Mary Ann called Denise's younger sister, Karen, who she also knew quite well. Her sister was sympathetic to our problem and

helped out by telling her parents that Denise called and said she was spending the night at a friend's house. In reality, she would be spending the night at my house. But there was a catch. Denise's sister was tired of being stuck in the house and wanted to join us.

Karen convinced her parents to allow her to spend the night with Denise at her friend's house. We had to go and pick her up around the corner from her parent's place. By the time we got there, she had two girlfriends with her that were also planning on spending the night at my house. I was really upset, but didn't see any immediate way out. I brought Mary Ann, Denise, Karen and her two friends back to my house. Fortunately, Karen and her friends didn't drink. They were more interested in putting on make-up, listening to the stereo and talking than drinking or starting trouble for me.

Karen and her friends had sleeping bags and slept in my living room. Mary Ann and I placed Denise in the extra bedroom and shared my bedroom. Despite my brilliant idea to use Denise to help keep things cool between Mary Ann and me, she was just where I did not want her to be…in my bed. Thankfully, Mary Ann went right to sleep and there were no further complications on that front.

Denise got up once during the night. I checked on her to be sure she was alright and to make sure that she knew where she was. She was fine. She threw up for a couple of minutes, then showered and went back to sleep. I was back in bed by the time the shower turned off. Once I was certain Denise was alright, I went back to sleep.

Denise had a habit of sleeping naked under the covers at home. Her younger sister really hated that habit, but since the two had separate beds, there wasn't much she could say about it. When I got up around seven in the morning, everyone else was still asleep.

As I walked down the hallway towards the bathroom, I noticed that Denise was lying on the bed completely naked for everyone to see.

I had to use the bathroom bad, so I went there before doing anything else. When I came out, I tried closing the door to the extra bedroom, but Denise had her stuff in the way and moving it would have probably woken her up. Instead, I tried waking up Karen to go in and cover up her sister. Karen was dead to the world and refused to get up.

Finally, I took a chance and moved the stuff that Denise had blocking the bedroom door and got it closed without waking her up. It must have been around five in the morning, so I went back to sleep for a while. By the time I woke up it was after eight. Karen and her friends were awake and watching television.

I grabbed some clean clothes, headed to the bathroom, cleaned up and got dressed. I couldn't wait to get Denise, Karen and her sleepover friends out of my house! Just as I was about to open the bathroom door, I heard laughing in the hallway. It was Karen and her friends. They went into the bedroom where Denise was sleeping to get some makeup out of her bag and saw that Denise was naked on the bed for all to see.

While they thought the situation was funny, I was disgusted with everything. I started yelling at the girls to cover up Denise and get out of the bedroom. The noise woke up Mary Ann. She came to see what was happening and found me in the doorway of the bedroom staring at Denise lying naked on the bed and yelling at a roomful of half-dressed young girls.

Mary Ann handled the situation better than I thought she would, but I knew this whole thing didn't sit well with her. It didn't sit well with me either. I couldn't believe how stupid I had been by

letting all these people manipulate me, but that was the story of my life. I always tried to help people and no good deed goes unpunished. I decided to put my foot down and knew it was time for a good old fashioned dose of honesty.

I made Karen and her friends get dressed and took them home. Denise's father was a guy named Eddie. He knew me and all about my paranormal work. I decided to be honest with him about what happened the night before and he took it well. He told me that Denise was having problems saying no to partying and easily understood how things got out of hand.

After we talked for a while and I promised to bring her straight home next time, Eddie came back with me to my house to get Denise. Mary Ann had her dressed and ready to go. Eddie helped his daughter into his car and thanked me for being honest with him. Mary Ann waited inside. By the time I got back into the house, it was very quiet.

I looked around the house until I came to the other bedroom. There was Mary Ann lying naked on the bed as Denise had been and pretending to be asleep. She thought it was very funny. I laughed because I was so exhausted from everything that I didn't know what else to do. I left the room and suggested she put some clothes on.

Mary Ann was playing a prank, but I also knew she was teasing me. It was not a good sign of things to come and I was sure she would make a play for me before the New Year's week was over. That concerned me not just because I didn't want to complicate my life any further, but because I didn't want to upset her.

It was now almost lunch time, so Mary Ann made some sandwiches while I cleaned up after the previous night's teen sleepover in my living room. I also tackled the throw up mess left

in my bathroom by Denise. By the time I finished, lunch was ready and we both sat down to eat. We shared some enjoyable conversation and, for the first time in a while, I felt at ease.

Just as we were finishing lunch, an unbelievably loud sound filled the air. It was my friend Bruce pulling into the driveway on his old Indian motorcycle. Bruce was a tall, kind of chunky, gawky looking guy with long black hair. He lived nearby and loved cruising around the neighborhood on an antique motorcycle that his father gave to him on his eighteenth birthday. He once attended the same high school as I did, but quit and hadn't yet found his way in life.

Bruce's father was a college professor and his mother was a secretary. That was about as normal as his life got. He had an older sister that hated everyone and rarely spoke. His mother's sister ran a brothel out of a small house in a quiet neighborhood on the south side of St Pete. The place was always filled with beautiful young women. Bruce's parents did all they could to discourage any contact with her, but Bruce loved to visit her (for more than just family reasons I'm sure).

My first contact with Bruce occurred during my sophomore year of high school. He was still in school at that time and everyone called him Bruce the Moose. He just had that look and always acted kind of goofy. However, he was a living example of the fact that you can't judge a book by its cover. Bruce had street smarts and good common sense when he chose to use it.

If I had to describe Bruce, I would say he was constantly at odds with himself. He was always upbeat and tried to make the best out of most any situation, but the most insignificant things upset him. He never did well in school, but he made no effect in that regard. Bruce knew a lot of people, but didn't have any real friends. He tried drugs, but wasn't a habitual user. He drank beer, but rarely

got drunk. At some point he had a spiritual awakening and gave up any drug use and drinking, but retained his rebel image.

I hadn't seen Bruce for a while and was surprised to find him living near my rental house. He moved into a small apartment in a complex around the corner. He saw me outside sometime during the first few days after I moved into the rental house and we reconnected. I told him to come by anytime and was kind of glad to see him again. He was one of those pop-up people that were often as entertaining as they were annoying.

Mary Ann thought Bruce was crazy, but tolerated him for my sake. I invited Bruce in for some lunch and we all talked for a while. Like most people that came into my life, Bruce had brushes with the paranormal and supernatural. Although he considered himself a Christian, he was also very interested in metaphysical matters. The same was true of his girlfriend Aimee.

Aimee was a quiet girl with strawberry blond hair that sat at our lunch table at school. The only time she got involved in our conversations was when we brought up a topic that she disagreed with. The rest of the time she just read books or sat there with a face that could sour milk. She was the last person in the world that I would have thought could have ever gotten involved with Bruce, but that's exactly what happened.

It began after Bruce and Louise joined our lunch table crowd. They met me at a Christian youth ranch ministry I occasionally attended. Louise was a bit of a wild child with dark hair that had few manners and played guitar. Her mother worked in a bridal shop and her dad co-owned a used merchandise store along with his older brother. They were originally from a small town in upstate New York.

Louise had a younger brother named George and they all lived in

an old house in Gulfport. As if it were any surprise, Louise told our little lunchtime gathering that her house was haunted. Specifically, she felt that her brother's room was haunted. I decided to investigate during my junior year of high school and headed over to meet Louise's family on a Saturday.

They were nice people that didn't have very much and lived modestly. Her family owned the old house they lived in and it was a creepy place. Mostly wood with two floors, a huge porch and large backyard, I guessed that it had originally been built as a winter place or tourist house. It had an old and almost sinister atmosphere to it and reminded me of a house from some Slasher flick filmed in the South.

After meeting the family and talking for a while, I took a look at George's room. He was a polite and friendly twelve year old boy that had a neat collection of matchbox cars. George had gleaned them from his father's second hand store and proudly showed them off to me. Apart from the creepy feeling given off by the entire house, his room was as average as any other twelve year old boy's room. It was obvious the family was religious and that no one in the house worshipped the devil or practiced black magic.

Before we left George's room, Louise told me to take off my watch and leave it on his dresser. I did this wondering if this was some sort of a test. We walked out of the room and she closed the door. Louise and her family took me through the rest of the house and then we all returned to their living room. They were curious about me, so I gave them a brief description of my life and how I became interested in the paranormal.

After enjoying some delicious iced tea, Louise took me back up to George's room. The door to the room was open and my watch had been moved from the dresser to the bed, despite the fact that no one went into that room from the time we left it. Louise told me

that things were sometimes moved around and other times not. We tried the watch trick again several times, but it didn't work.

Louise and her family told me that none of them had seen any ghosts or experienced phenomenon other then things being moved around George's room. I was certain this was a classic case of Poltergeist and told them so. I suggested that since no one was being harmed or frightened out of their wits, they should just leave well enough alone. These types of activities tended to stop on their own after a few years.

Despite my simplified explanation for the paranormal problem that George was having, I also felt that more was going on there than met the eye. I was right in more ways than I first guessed.
Although it was still early afternoon, Louise insisted that I stay for dinner. In the meantime, her dad drove us over to his store. It was an older building owned by her uncle with lots of second hand stuff for sale, but the location was excellent. It was situated right on a major street that ran through Gulfport and always seemed to have people coming, going and buying things.

While her father and brother busied themselves with customers, Louise and I went next store to a small pizza place. We ate lunch and talked for a while. Louise was bright and motivated. Her family was rough around the edges. I sensed that any bad habits she had and wild ways she exhibited came from them. She was a good student and talented guitarist, but her parents kept pushing her to play country and western music. She didn't like that genre.

I had dinner with Louise and her family that evening. Afterward, Louise and I talked for a while on their porch. It was during that time that I made an interesting discovery. Louise told me that she had seen a UFO several times during her life. Her parents also saw them. The sightings occurred when she was younger and during a time when the family lived in upstate New York.

Louise and I went back into the house and asked her parents about the UFO sightings. They easily recalled each event which seemed to involve an egg-shaped object seen near their former home in a small upstate New York village. On each occasion, the family was in their backyard when the UFO appeared and all the events occurred in the early evening. Louise's father was certain that the UFO was some secret craft being tested by the government, but everyone else wasn't as sure about that.

I took note of the UFO stories and told Louise that I would see her in school as I left for home. I tried keeping things as casual as possible, but sensed that she liked me. Although she was cute and easy to like, the last thing I wanted to do was get involved with a family as rowdy as hers. I had my own family issues to deal with and didn't need anyone else's problems.

Louise was dating Bruce in a very casual sense. She was a year younger than him and I got the impression that her major attraction to Bruce was the fact that he had access to his father's pick-up truck and could give her rides when she needed them. She was always trying to get out of her house. As time went on I found out that her dad occasionally went on drinking binges during which he began violent. Louise, George and her mother became the focus of that violence.

By the time I arrived at school on Monday, things had changed. I found out about these changes at our lunch table when Louise and Bruce announced that they were no longer seeing each other. Louise and Bruce had a long talk on Sunday. She told him that she liked me and he told her that he liked Aimee. It seems that Bruce and Aimee had been calling each other on the phone for over a week and went out together for the first time on Sunday evening after church.

Bruce was great at making sudden and often unexpected pronouncements. That's why I wasn't surprised when he announced that he and Aimee would be dating and that I needed to get together with Louise because she liked me. He did this in front of the entire lunch table and that really put me on the spot. In the interest of keeping the peace, I said that I would be happy to casually date Louise. I turned the tables on Bruce by exclaiming that I wanted Bruce and Aimee to double date with us as a kind of ice breaker.

My suggestion was a kind of dirty trick because I knew that Aimee really didn't like me. She was someone that looked at the supernatural as something to be experienced, not investigated or categorized. She had a Ouija Board and made much use of it. I sat through a few of her sessions in order to humor Bruce, but was less than impressed with her abilities if she had any at all.

We doubled dated to some movies and school events. The Exorcist was playing in theatres at that time and we all decided to go and see it. The girls were scared out of their pants and I was just plain shocked. I had never experienced a movie like that. Bruce thought it was all very funny and spent the rest of that evening scaring the girls.

While I went to get the car, he told Aimee and Louise that he needed to us the bathroom in the mall where the movie theater was. By the time I pulled up to the mall entrance it was pouring rain. After Aimee and Louise got in to the car, Bruce appeared out of no where. He slammed his face up against the side window and yelled, "I am the Devil!" The girls all but jumped out of their skin. I couldn't stop laughing because it really took the edge off what had been a tension filled movie-going experience. Things got even funnier. We went to an ice cream shop that was in downtown St Petersburg. Aimee was a real snob and loved this particular shop

because people from the downtown yacht club went there.

There were several antique and second hand shops around the corner from the ice cream shop. By the time we were ready to leave, it was raining very badly outside. I again offered to go and get the car so that the girls wouldn't get soaked. I ran up the street, jumped in the car and pulled around to pick up Bruce and the girls. Bruce was gone again and the girls weren't sure where he was.

After waiting a few minutes, Bruce came walking slowly toward the front of the car. He held a beat up briefcase in his hand and was wearing an old suit that he must have picked up at one of the second hand stores around the block. He looked just like Father Merrin from The Exorcist. He opened the passenger side door and said, "What a great day for an exorcism. I am the Exorcist!" Not to be outdone, I told my little joke.

"What happens if you don't pay your exorcist?" I asked. "You get repossessed!" I got booed, but Bruce was always a hard act to follow.

Bruce drove us crazy for the next few days by actually wearing those stupid clothes, that dumb hat and carrying around the briefcase. He kept telling everyone that he was The Exorcist. I took it all in stride. My life was always so complicated and it was nice to be able to hang around with someone that made me laugh. I tolerated his craziness as much as he tolerated my confusion.

It was during this time that more paranormal surprises came along. I discovered that before Bruce had his spiritual awakening, he had dabbled in black magic and what some might call witchcraft, not Wicca in the truest sense. As if to impress Aimee, he occasionally demonstrated some of his magical prowess. Such dabbling is always a mistake and Bruce found that out the hard way.

I was still living at home with my parents when Aimee called in the

middle of the night and was distraught. She asked me to come over to her house right away, so I borrowed my parent's car and arrived at her house less than thirty minutes later. Her parents were out of town and she asked Bruce to spend the night. Less than an hour before, he was demonstrating some weird spell to her and suddenly fainted.

Bruce was unconscious, but seemed to be breathing. Aimee was afraid to call the police or an ambulance because she didn't want to get in trouble with her parents. She was only sixteen at the time and Bruce was seventeen years old. I wasn't sure what to do, so I took some wash cloths with cold water on them and started wiping down his face. This brought him around and back to full consciousness.

A few minutes later, Bruce said that he had been reciting a spell into a mirror in the bathroom when he lost consciousness. He was preparing to make his eyes turn color for Aimee when he claimed that ghostly hands came out of the mirror and started to choke him. I didn't comment on his story, but suggested that since he had previously decided to leave all that behind he had better quit messing around with that stuff.

Bruce was still shaky, so I helped him up to use the bathroom. Before I could put on the bathroom light, a strange glow came out of the mirror and Bruce looked as though he was being choked again. This is something that both Aimee and I witnessed and it really freaked us out. We pulled him out of the bathroom and I brought them over to my house. My folks were away again that weekend, so there was plenty of room for them. Bruce was able to use my bathroom without incident.

He and Aimee prayed and read the Bible for several hours after I went to bed. The next morning was Saturday, so we didn't have to worry about going to school. Instead, I went over and picked up

Louise. I told her about what happened. I knew that she had become a strong Christian since her spiritual awakening at a youth ranch meeting and I wanted her to speak with and comfort Aimee.

Louise spoke with Aimee and she subsequently had a spiritual awakening of her own shortly after that unusual event. Later that day, Louise and I brought one of the Spiritualist ladies over top purge Aimee's house of evil. It must have worked because there were no more incidents at that house. Aimee threw out her Ouija Board. I remained upset about what I had witnessed for days and the worst wasn't over yet.

I went over the Bruce's house a few days later to pick him up for a double date. He was in his room getting ready while I sat on a couch near the back porch which over-looked the water. It was a beautiful scene. Just as Bruce walked into the living room, I turned to look at him and saw a table lamp fly off the table and into his face. It was one of the most remarkable bits of paranormal phenomenon I have ever witnessed.

Bruce was shaken, but not harmed. He made me promise not to tell his parents about it and I agreed. However, I also knew that something had to be done. After convincing him to discard any and all materials that were still in his possession that had to do with black magic, I brought the Spiritualist ladies over when his folks weren't home. Once again they managed to bring peace to a disturbed home, although I knew they hated dealing with negative forces.

Louise and I became very close for a while, but I was too conflicted and confused to be able to really enjoy a close relationship with anyone. We started dating apart from Aimee and Bruce and began a physical relationship. It was a mistake because what we really enjoyed was each other's company and the conversations we shared. I always suspected that Louise had some

sort of an alien experience or connection beyond the sightings, but she never admitted it to me. As Bruce and Aimee got closer, Louise and I drifted out of each other's lives.

I saw less and less of Bruce and Aimee for a while. Bruce quit school and Aimee transferred to another high school where she could take advanced German language classes. Aimee was the youngest of several children. One was a brother serving in the U.S. Military at a base in Germany. She went to see him there during a summer break from school and fell in love with the culture.

After I reconnected with Bruce, I also reconnected with Aimee. Bruce and Aimee eventually made a decision to get married and I could not have been more shocked. He wanted me to be his best man, so I agreed to have dinner with Bruce and Aimee at her parent's house to discuss the upcoming wedding. I always enjoyed talking with her mom. She was a UFO buff that had all kinds of news clippings going back for years. Her father was a retired from the Navy and had his own peculiar story to tell.

Aimee's father was a retired sailor named Joseph. He was a polite, but serious individual. During a lighter moment in our conversation when he was commenting on his wife‘s interest in UFOs and all the sightings that were going on in Florida, I happen to mention the Philadelphia Experiment. There were several references to it in a few of the UFO books that I read and since it had been a Navy Project, I wondered what he thought about the whole thing.

Instead of commenting on it, Joseph suggested that we eat and then get back to the discussion of his daughter's upcoming wedding. After dinner, he sat down across from me while the others muddled through some wedding plans. He became very serious and told me that in 1944 he had met another sailor who seemed deeply disturbed about the outcome of a strange

experiment connected to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard in 1943.

The man claimed that his best friend died during that experiment. Joseph and his new acquaintance shared many conversations about it after becoming friends. The man said that after making some casual inquires, a doctor at the shipyard hospital confided to him that his friend had died as a result of melting into the ship's superstructure. The physician claimed the man was still alive when they tried to free him from part of the deck, but he had been fused with it!

I encouraged Joseph to write down everything he could remember about his conversations with the sailor. He agreed and actually took things a step further. He attempted to contact the man whom he had befriended years before, but hadn't heard from in some time. A mutual friend told him that the sailor passed away, but provided a contact phone number for his widow.

When Joseph called, the woman accepted his condolences and the two had a brief conversation. It seems that after the sailor retired in the 1960's, he tried contacting others who had been a part of the Navy Project to get more information on the death of his friend. He died just a few months later in a hit and run car accident. This made Joseph think twice about his own investigation which abruptly ended after that call.

Once again I had been drawn to a person with important information about a paranormal event. It was as if fate could not bear to leave me alone. Armed with what Joseph told me, I began a long and interesting search for more information about the Philadelphia Experiment. But that's a story I will save for another book.

Bruce and Aimee eventually married, but it didn't last. I never really discussed it much with Bruce, but I knew that Aimee had

intimacy issues. He used to call her The Virgin Aimee when they were dating because she refused to have premarital sex. After they married, I heard from a couple of her girlfriends that she had a terrible fear of getting pregnant.

My best guess was that Bruce and Aimee were more a work in progress than anything else. Aimee kept waiting for Bruce to grow up, and anyone that knew him knew that was never going to happen. She wanted stability and he couldn't provide for himself or anyone else. Personally, I didn't care. I liked Bruce and understood more than most how that anyone can become trapped in a persona set out for them by fate.

Mary Ann, Bruce and I had a pleasant afternoon talking and went swimming at the hotel later that day. Bruce was taking some evening classes to get his high school diploma, so he thundered out of the hotel parking lot on his Indian Motorcycle just after dinnertime. I took Mary Ann to dinner at the hotel restaurant. They had different acts playing in the lounge which opened up into the restaurant during show times.

That evening we enjoyed some good Dixieland music courtesy of a band that played the hotel a couple of times a week. I loved different kinds of music and we had dinner the next night at Lenny Dee's Den. It was a restaurant in the hotel shopping center. Lenny was a Chicago born performer who had a string of hits in the 1950s. He played the organ and occasionally sang, but he always gave everyone a great show and had lots of other acts performing there as well.

I'm sure people that knew me thought I was as crazy as Bruce. I was not your typical teen an had enough eclectic interests in all kinds of things to make most people go crazy. The one thing that saved me from being completely isolated was that most of my friends were as crazy as I was in their own ways. If not crazy,

certainly different.

As I sat listening to music that was meant for people twenty years older than I was in a club owned by a guy that got famous by playing an organ, I realized that I was sitting with a beautiful girl that I was trying hard not to date. A girl that might have been impregnated by Aliens. Thoughts like that really put things into perspective for me.

Chapter Six
The End Of The Beginning

Mary Ann and I prepared for New Year's Eve. We decided to attend a party given by Toby for people that didn't use drugs or alcohol. I hadn't made a connection with him in a while and I needed a dose of normality in my life. Even after his dad's unexplained experiences with the house that he fixed up and sold, Toby rejected the paranormal. When we went out, it was as friends without any paranormal complications.

Toby loved miniature golf. When I first met him in junior high, he introduced me to a terrific miniature golf course on Treasure Island. After playing there a bunch of times, I got good at it. I even won several of the weekly tournaments they had. The prize was a free dinner at the Careless Navigator, a nice restaurant up the street from the golf place. Thinking about those days gave me an idea.

I asked Mary Ann how she felt about Miniature Golf. She played a couple of times and liked it. I suggested that we go and play a few rounds at the Treasure Island location until it was time to head back to my house and get ready for Toby's Party. I invited Toby along and we all had a terrific time. Just as we were starting our second round, I ran into Clarence. He was a guy that I met in shop class during my time at the old junior high school.

Clarence was a very strange guy. He had a low voice that made him

a favorite of the chorus teacher. Although the chorus class never sang anything more controversial by The Beatles than Penny Lane, Clarence was a John Lennon fan and was always trying to get the chorus teacher to allow him to sing Lennon‘s song, ‘Imagine.’ He had all of the former Beatle’s albums up to that time and tried to mimic his music and appearance.

He tried learning to play Lennon’s songs on guitar, but didn‘t have much musical talent apart from his voice. Clarence also failed at trying to look like John Lennon. He had long stringy hair that made him look more like a hippy accountant, than the musical legend. He also enjoyed music by Chopin (talk about a diverse musical taste) and was always trying to get me to listen to classical music. It did rub off a bit and allowed me to rediscover some of the classical music composers.

If you could get past his appearance, Chopin fixation and Beatle obsession, Clarence had a good heart. He was very smart with an extremely high IQ and always got better grades in school than everyone else. His dad died in an auto accident several years before I met him and his mom worked all the time. As a young teen, he was forced to stay home with an older sister most of the time. She hated Clarence, loved Johnny Cash music and played it loudly throughout the house. Not the best situation for someone into John Lennon and Chopin.

Clarence walked up to me one day at the junior high during lunch and introduced himself. He told me later that he sensed I was different from most of the students and I guess you could say he was right. I went over his house a couple of times and we became friends. His mother was over-protective, but finally allowed him to come over my house. After my parents took him along with us on several outings, I began to understand his mother’s concern. Clarence was very mischievous. He loved playing practical jokes

and setting people off with pranks.

I recall one time in shop class when he pretended to accidentally saw his arm off. Our shop teacher was a guy that was too serious about everything and the perfect candidate for one of his pranks. Clarence was using a huge circular saw in the back of the classroom when he fell to the floor holding his arm and began screaming for help. He released a huge about of water with red food coloring in it from a plastic bottle under his arm as he fell.

Our shop teacher was convinced that Clarence had sawed off part of his arm. When he finally got to him, the shop teacher bent over him and asked what happened. Clarence reached up to the teacher with his arm and said, "I just slipped on this food dye and need some help up." The teacher was furious and sent him to the office. We were all in hysterics and couldn't stop laughing.

Clarence's pranks always guaranteed that he had a short shelf life as anyone's friend. He used the fact that his father died, his mother worked hard and that he had an annoying sister that hated him to make people feel sorry enough for him to over look his faults. He excused his own eccentricities by convincing everyone that he was some kind of genius who felt a need to express himself in unusual ways, but even I had a limit as far as what I would be willing to tolerate.

I stopped hanging out with Clarence after he thought it was funny to untie a bunch of the small boats that were temporarily docked in the back of a waterfront restaurant where we were eating with my folks. My dad was furious and it was only through his intervention and the fact that the boats didn't float far from the dock that Clarence wasn't arrested. For that reason and others, I wasn't overjoyed to see him at the Miniature Golf Course.

I was cordial and introduced Clarence to Mary Ann and Toby. He

joined us for a round of miniature golf and behaved for a while, but it didn't take long for his wild and unpredictable side to kick in. After we finished playing and were returning to the registration area to pay for another round, Clarence started making faces at the elderly man working behind the registration desk through the glass that surrounded it. I could hardly believe my eyes.

It might have been funny when he was fourteen, but the guy was seventeen years old! The elderly man told Clarence to stop, but he didn't. We were all asked to leave and I was more than a little pissed. I apologized to Toby and Mary Ann and told Toby that we would see him at his New Year's Eve party that evening. After walking Mary Ann to the car, I went to back to talk with Clarence.

Before I could say anything, he got a strange look on his face and said, "I'm sorry that I had to do that, Bill. I needed to talk to you alone. There is something I have to tell you." I recognized the tone and manner of speaking, but hoped I was wrong.

"It's me," Clarence continued. I instantly knew it was the Angelic being that had been speaking through Jenny. I couldn't believe that it was now using Clarence to speak with me and my first thought was that something had happened to Jenny while on the trip with her parents. Anticipating my fear, the being responded to it. "Jenny is fine and that's not why I am here. You are going to meet someone that needs your help and support. You will know her when you do." Clarence stopped talking and walked away from me as if we had never even run into each other that afternoon. I was freaked, but regained my composure and headed back to the car.

While driving back to my house, I decided it was time to tell Mary Ann what was happening with the Angelic being. She shared her most personal paranormal experiences with me and I felt that she deserved to know about what was happening between myself,

Jenny and the being. I felt that since the being had chosen to speak with me through Clarence, I would not be violating any confidences between myself and Jenny.

I explained the situation and was surprised at how well Mary Ann took the news. The last thing I wanted was for her to think I was crazy. We were close friends and I knew she depended on me as someone she could share her experiences with. I didn't want to shake her confidence in me.

The experience with the Angelic being had me very upset. I always hoped that the being was just a figment of Jenny's imagination and that its predictions or apparent otherworldly knowledge was merely coincidental. When it spoke through Clarence, that changed everything.

Mary Ann and I arrived back at my house. She took the news about the Angelic being in stride, but I was still upset and just sat on the couch trying to come to grips with everything. Life was over-taking me in so many ways and it was during times like this that I wished by dad was still around to help me sort it all out. I envied him. He lived a normal life during a simpler time. Not that surviving war or his time in the military had been easy, but it was less complicated.

It would be the year 1974 in just a few hours. I would turn eighteen years of age in less than five months and graduate high school a month after that. I had no idea what I was doing, where I was going and everyone around me seemed to need more help with their lives than I did.

Mary Ann sensed my state of mind. We had been friends long enough for her to be able to read my moods like a book. "Bill," she said, "I am going to sit next to you and hold your hand until you feel better." I welcomed her empathy and needed it more than

anything else at that moment. The hand holding lead to hugging and I was just too emotionally spent to resist her physical reassurance.

I knew it was probably a mistake, but we became romantically involved that day and began a physical relationship. I had to admit that by the time I started getting ready for Toby's party, I felt a lot better. As much as I cared for Jenny, I was concerned about her connection to the Angelic being and her life after high school. She had a promising future and, as far as could see at that moment, mine was anything but certain.

Mary Ann was in a wonderful mood. I wasn't sure whether it was because she finally got what she wanted, or just because we both needed the kind of physical reassurance that could only come through intimate contact. Either way, we headed off to Toby's party feeling better than we had all week.

After Toby's dad began buying up distressed properties and fixing them up, the family moved into what had once been an old farm house in Gulfport. His dad converted it into a fabulous modern home with lots of trees and space around it. Mary Ann and I were stunned at how beautiful and roomy the home was.

We chose to spend New Year's Eve at Toby's party because it was for teens that didn't drink or do drugs. Those were some of the few temptations that most of my friends and I had managed to resist. We knew a few of the kids at the party from school and others from church and a local youth ministry, but many were strangers to us.

There was dancing, great food and lots of chips and soda. We spent a lot of time talking, reconnecting with people we knew and getting to know those we didn't. It was there that I met Robin. She met Toby at school and had a friendly relationship with him. Like most of us, she was from somewhere else. Robin moved to Florida

from Michigan a few years back. She had an unusual family history.

Her step dad was her dad's brother. She had three brothers and four other sisters. Her mom kept moving romantically back and forth between her dad and her step dad. Over all, not the most stable environment for children. Her older brother and two sisters had already moved out and she couldn't wait to follow.

Robin was a pretty girl with light brown hair and a shapely body. She became a swimsuit model at the age of fourteen. Now seventeen, she had appeared in various swimsuit ads in store catalogues every year since. It didn't pay a huge amount, but she got lots of free clothes and store discounts from Sears and J.C. Penney.

Toby introduced Robin to me, and I introduced Mary Ann to her. They found a lot of things to talk about and I was glad. I didn't really want to end up with any more girl friends in my life, even if they were just friends. I met some guys and we went out back to play some basketball on a small court that Toby's dad built.

Robin and Mary Ann spent most of the evening talking and that worried me. Mary Ann had enough problems in her own life to fill a script for a supernatural soap opera for a year. She didn't need any more problems or complications, any more than I did. But fate had other ideas.

By the time it was almost midnight, we all got together in Toby's living room to watch the countdown to the New Year on TV. We put on party hats, got our noise makers ready and went crazy when the New Year arrived. Mary Ann and I stayed around for another hour, and then headed back to my house.

In an attempt to keep things as honest as possible, Mary Ann and I still slept in separate bedrooms that night. We woke up late the next

morning and talked about the events of the last few days. She was due to return home that weekend and we both prepared to return to school shortly afterward.

The phone rang around noon and it was Robin. Mary Ann gave her my number in case she wanted to talk. I handed the phone to her and the two spoke for ten minutes. Afterward, Mary Ann asked if I could drive her to Robin's house. She lived on the north side of St Pete in a nice house with lots of bedrooms and a pool.

When we arrived, Robin invited us in to meet her family. Her step dad was a stern guy. He was a World War Two veteran that had been severely injured while serving on a ship in the South Pacific. He had a bad leg that caused him constant pain. As bad as I felt for him, I could see that he transferred his pain to the kids. His brother (Robin's biological dad) was a big shot businessman in Michigan.

Robin's mom was smart and I could see that she enjoyed pitting her husband against his brother. She used both of them to get her way. Despite the unusual antics between her mom, dad and step dad, the family was well off. Her step dad was a retired independent trucker and received money from the government because had was a wounded veteran. He also had a PX card, which allowed him to buy all kinds of things at big discounts.

Mary Ann wanted Robin to spend the day with us. She did and we all got to know each other better. She attended our school, but I couldn't remember seeing her there. While we were hanging out at my house, Bruce came by to wish us a happy New Year. He announced that he had been kicked out of his apartment and was no longer welcomed at home. I said that he could stay with me for a while until he found another place.

I dropped Robin back home later that day and took Mary Ann out to dinner. We talked and agreed not to take our new relationship

any further until I had a chance to speak with Jenny. In the mean time, Mary Ann became friendlier with Robin and asked if I would pick her up and take them to the mall. They both had some clothes shopping to do in preparation for the new semester at school.

I wasn't interested in shopping, so I dropped them off and told Mary Ann to call me when they were done. I headed back home to wait for their call. Bruce moved his stuff into my storage room and went to work. Mary Ann was due to return home that weekend, so I said he could use the extra bedroom after she left.

I couldn't understand what happened with Bruce. He had a good job in construction and had been on the wagon for months. He looked perfectly sober and was behaving himself. I guessed that he managed to rub his landlord the wrong way. He had a habit of getting on people's nerves if they didn't know him. I also guessed that his parents were probably just worn out. They had spent years dealing with all his behavioral problems and needed a break. Mary Ann called and told me that she and Robin were done shopping. I picked them up at the mall, dropped Robin home and we headed back to my house. Bruce came home from work around dinnertime. After talking it over with Mary Ann, we agreed to sleep together in my bedroom until she returned home that weekend and let Bruce have the spare bedroom. He was thrilled and quickly settled in.

Later that evening the phone rang. Robin called and spoke with Mary Ann. She was very upset and asked that we meet her at a strip mall near her house. When we arrived, she had a huge laundry bag with her and I knew that wasn't a good sign. Robin stood outside the car and spoke with her for a few minutes, than asked if she could spend the night at my house. I agreed as long as she didn't mind sleeping on the sofa.

When we got back to my house, I found out that Robin's life was a

lot more complicated than I thought. When she got home from shopping at the mall, the only one home was her younger brother and her step dad. The others were out shopping. After his brother went over to a friend‘s house, her step dad asked her what she had bought with HIS money. She showed him the bags of new clothes and he insisted that she try them on and give him a kind of fashion show.

She was afraid of him and did what he asked. After showing him how she looked in a few of her new outfits, she was changing into another one when he came into her room. He molested her while she was in her bra and panties. Sadly, this was not the first time this happened and she was certain that he had done the same thing to a couple of her sisters.

That session with her step dad had been the worst one yet. He had come very close to raping her, but she started screaming and threatened to tell her mom. She suspected that her mom already knew that he was touching them in a playful manner, but she was sure that she had no idea how lecherous he had become. Robin dressed, threw everything important she had into a huge laundry bag, climbed out her window and lugged it up the street to the strip mall where she used a pay phone to call us.

I couldn’t wrap my mind around the concept of someone doing anything like what Robin said her step dad was doing to her, but I believed her because I could see that she was distraught. Bruce and Mary Ann were equally shocked and helped by calming her down. Bruce had a gentle way about him and often used it to help people. The same was true about Mary Ann. In the midst of all this, Jenny came to mind.

Jenny and I had already spoken on the phone a few times over the past week while she was away with her folks. I enjoyed talking to her, but wondered what I would say during her next call. There

was no way I was going to reveal what happened between Mary Ann and I over the phone. That would have to wait until she returned and we could speak face to face.

She knew that Mary Ann was staying over my place, but wasn't concerned about it. Actually, I think she just resigned herself to the fact that if anything happened, it happened. I'm sure that Jenny knew I was very insecure about our relationship, and I was sure that she sensed that I didn't see much of a future between us after we both graduated.

Moments after thinking about Jenny, she called. I plugged the phone into my bedroom phone jack for some privacy and told her about Bruce, explaining that he was temporarily staying with me. I also gave her the short version of the Robin story and said she would probably be staying with me for a day or two until we could reach her biological dad or an older sister. They both lived in the Midwest.

Jenny took all the news very well, knowing how strange my life was and that I tended to help people first and ask questions later. As we prepared to end the call, she said, "I hope you still have room for me when I get back." I knew what she meant and was about to reassure her when a familiar voice took over her end of the conversation. It was the Angelic being.

"Bill, it's me. You need to help Robin. This is the person I told you about through Clarence."

Jenny never met Clarence and knew nothing about our miniature golfing adventure or what happened that day. After her brief statement, the being said no more and Jenny was again on the phone. I finished up our phone conversation by telling Jenny that I cared for her very much and couldn't wait to see her again.

After the call with Jenny, I returned my attention to the Robin

situation. Once again my life had been complicated by forces outside of my control and I fell right into the palm of their hands. I walked back into the living room and reminded Mary Ann and Robin that school was going to start in less than a week. Whatever we were going to do, we needed to do it fast.

Robin reached her dad by phone and told him what happened. He was upset, but she was sure that he already knew about what was going on. He agreed to speak with his brother (her step dad), her mom and to send her money to come and stay with him. She assured him that she was staying at a safe place and he told her to go ahead and stay at my house for a few days until he could get everything sorted out.

It was almost the end of the week and I had never been more exhausted. Bruce, Mary Ann, Robin and I were sitting in front of the TV when a commercial came on for Disney World. We had all been there at least once with our folks ever since the place opened in October of 1971. Since Mary Ann didn't need to go home for another few days and Robin's life would be in limbo until after the weekend, I asked if they wanted to go to Disney World.

It may have sounded like a crazy thing to do, but Disney World was less than a hundred miles from us and I thought that going there and staying overnight might relieve some of the stress that we were all feeling. Bruce couldn't go because he had to work, but Mary Ann and Robin thought it was a great idea.
We drove to Disney World on Friday, visited the theme park and stayed at a nearby motel overnight. We returned to the theme park on Saturday, stayed overnight again and returned to my house on Sunday morning. We had been gone for just two days, but that was long enough for Bruce to throw yet another wrench into the works of my already over complicated life.

I returned home to find three people that I didn't know sleeping in

my living room. The place was messy and Bruce came lumbering out of his bedroom, half asleep, to explain the situation to me. He said that the three guys were friends that had been staying in an apartment with him before they were all kicked out. They worked together in construction and needed a place to crash for a few nights.

I was furious and told Bruce that I wasn't running a flop house. I didn't mind helping people when I could, but I already had three house guests in my two bedroom house and didn't need anymore. Bruce tried to smooth things over by telling me how one of the guys had defrosted and cleaned out my refrigerator. It looked clean, but the rest of my place was a mess and I wasn't about to fill my house with strangers just because one of them had a knack for defrosting my refrigerator.

I got out the phone book and found several boarding houses located in downtown St Pete. I called and one of them answered the phone. They had rooms available for fair prices, so I told Bruce to drive his friends down there. He did and there was some peace in my house once again. While Bruce was gone, Mary Ann, Robin and I cleaned up the mess.

Bruce was back by lunchtime with the news that his friends got rooms at the boarding house. He also found a room he liked and decided to take it. I can't say that I wasn't happy about that. I liked Bruce, but he really was a hand full and I already had more problems than I cared to deal with.

It was time for Mary Ann to go back to her parent's house. I took her home later that day and stopped in to say hello to her parents. I also paid a courtesy all on The Colonel. Afterward, I drove back to my house with mixed feelings. I already missed Mary Ann and that troubled me. I started feeling the same about her that I did about Jenny. Fortunately, I knew myself well enough to know when I

was allowing emotion to cloud my thoughts. I decided to put my feelings about Mary Ann and Jenny on the back burner and concentrate on dealing with Robin and getting ready to return to school.

Robin's father called on Sunday night. He wired some money to a travel agency in town and told her to go and pick it up, along with an airline ticket from Tampa to Detroit. I went back to school on Monday morning and took Robin over to the travel agency to pick up her money and ticket on Monday afternoon. She flew out to Detroit that evening and I was glad that at least one problem in my life was solved.

Jenny returned to town with her family a couple of days late and went back to school on Wednesday. I wasn't looking forward to our reunion, because it was time to face the music. Jenny was really happy to see me when we met in the school parking lot that morning. We hugged for the longest time and I could see that she missed me. The feeling was mutual.

Seeing Jenny again was painful, because it reminded me of what I would have to give up. That school day was unnerving for me, because I wasn't sure about what to do. Jenny, Mary Ann and I sat together at lunch, but Mary Ann played it cool expecting me to break the news to her that night.

I went home that afternoon knowing that two girls I really cared about were both waiting for a phone call from me. I sat for over an hour trying to figure out what to do. I finally called Mary Ann to find out if she could come out with me for a bit. She said that would be fine and I picked her up a short while later.

I drove to a small park where we could stroll around and talk for a while. I told Mary Ann that I really cared about her. I explained that she meant the world to me and that I would never want her to

think that she was some kind of one night stand, but I could not date her as long as Jenny was around. If I broke up with Jenny to date her, it would hurt Jenny and cause her problems at school.

It wasn't that I cared for Jenny more than her; it was just that I had planned to stay with Jenny until after graduation. After that, I would break it off. I told Mary Ann that if she still wanted to date me at that time, it would be fine. I also told her that I didn't want to sneak around. I didn't want our relationship to deteriorate to barn yard sex.

That was one of the hardest things I ever had to do. I knew that Mary Ann was upset, but I saw no other way of handling the situation. I also made it plain to her that I was going to see Jenny and tell her everything that happened over the last week. That included what happened between Mary Ann and I. Mary Ann resigned herself to the situation.

I arrived to pick up Jenny around seven that night and drove us back to my house. I asked her to sit down and told her that I wanted to bring her up to speed on all that happened while she was gone. I laid it all out, including my romantic tryst with MaryAnn. She was surprised at my honestly, but not at what happened. She knew that Mary Ann was very self-willed and that I had a bad habit of allowing myself to fall into circumstances created for me by others.

I hoped that Jenny wouldn't blame Mary Ann for what happened. I made it clear that I was as guilty as she was, but I could see that my words were falling on deaf ears. I guessed that this was Jenny's way of dealing with what happened and there was little that I could do about it. I suggested that all three of us talk about it in the sitting area outside the lunch room at school the following day.

Mary Ann, Jenny and I sat down and began to discuss what

happened. My main concern was that we would remain friends. I wanted to continue to work with both of them as UFO Club officers and hoped that we could all move past what happened. I apologized to both of them and we came to an agreement that everything would go back to the way it was before.

Jenny and I continued dating and planned to attend the Senior Prom together. Mary Ann got back together with Bob, but remained aloof in a romantic sense. Even after they decided to go to the Senior Prom together, Mary Ann started calling me more often than I would have expected.

Thinking I had everything under control and that my house was mine again, a knock at my door threw my life back into chaos. Just a month after I went back to school, Robin was at my door with her bag on a Saturday afternoon. A friend drove her over after she was unable to reach Mary Ann. She tried staying with her biological dad, but her mom threatened legal trouble if she did. Promising that she had kicked her step dad out of the house, her mom insisted she return to Florida.

Not surprisingly, it was her mom and step dad that picked her up at the airport. Robin had been lied to again. Her step dad apologized to her for what happened, claiming that his pain medication caused the problem. He told her that the doctor gave him a new medication and that everything would be fine now, promising that it would never happen again.

Less than a week later, Robin was swimming in the pool they had in the back yard. She got out and went into the pool house they had to use the rest room. Their pool house had a tiny restroom and two changing areas. After she emerged from the rest room, her step dad was standing by one of the changing rooms waiting for her. He tried molesting her, but she ran to her room inside the house and locked the door.

Robin again stuffed a large laundry bag full of her things, climbed out her window and ran to the nearby strip mall to call a friend. Unable to get hold of Mary Ann, she got one of her sister's friends to drive her to my house. Apologizing for showing up unannounced at my door, she said that she lost my number and explained what happened to her in the pool house.

This was just what I didn't need, but I knew that I was probably Robin's only refuge at that time. Mary Ann was away for the weekend with her family, so I called Jenny and asked if she could come over. Jenny arrived later that evening and spoke with Robin at length. Robin explained her family history and told the sad tale of the abuse that she had experienced at the hands of her step dad. I sat quietly and listened.

Just as I was about to chime in and suggest that we call the police about this, Jenny's demeanor changed and my Angelic friend was back with a message for Robin. I can't recall all that was said, but the being promised to help her. I could see from Robin's reaction that the message was effective. She looked relived.

I would have preferred to have Robin stay with Jenny, but I knew her parents wouldn't want to get involved in that kind of a family squabble. The same was probably true of Mary Ann's folks even if they were home, so I told her she could stay at my place for a couple of days while we figured this thing out.

Robin again called her dad and tried to get some help. He felt constrained by legal concerns. Her mother again threatened him and told him to stay out of the entire affair. Meanwhile, the Angelic being had another surprise for me. It began speaking through Robin.

The day after she came back to my house, I was making lunch when Robin came out of the spare bedroom and offered to help.

While she finished up making sandwiches for us, her manner changed. She sat down at the dinette table I had in my kitchen and started talking to me in a different tone.

“Bill, it’s me. You must tell Robin to confront her step dad. It’s the only way to solve her problem.”

Robin got up, brought the sandwiches to the table and sat down again. It was obvious that she had no idea that this being was now speaking through her and I wasn’t about to tell her at that point. I went over to see Jenny later that afternoon and told her what happened. She was surprised, but agreed that the advice made sense. I called Robin’s mom and told her that I was bringing her over that evening and that we wanted to speak to her step dad.

Jenny and I told Robin that she needed to confront her step dad and mom about what was happening. We brought her over to her house that Sunday evening and sat in on the session. Robin told her mom what happened in the pool house and her step dad didn’t deny it. Instead, he told his own version.

Her step dad said that Robin was in the pool house bathroom and yelled for him to come in and help her. The clasp on the upper portion of her bathing suit got stuck and she asked him to come and help her fix it. When he touched her to help fix it, she went crazy and ran out of the pool house.

Her parents pointed out that Robin had a nervous breakdown less than two years before and that it was hard to believe anything she said. Robin pointed out that the breakdown was caused by her stepfather’s molestation sessions. Her mom said that he had some problems with a medication that were now solved. She didn’t feel that the molestation had been serious enough to break up the family or contact the authorities.

If ever there was a dysfunctional family, this one fit the bill.

Robin's mom wanted her back home, but she said that there was no way that was going to happen until she spoke with her biological dad some more. I could see that Robin wouldn't be safe in this house and told her mom that she could stay with me a few more days. We left that house far more upset than we were when we arrived.

I took Jenny and Robin out for ice cream and we discussed the mess. During our conversation, the Angelic being spoke to Jenny and me through Robin. "I am here and need to say something to you both. I will speak through Jenny and Robin. Robin is a special person and needs my help. In time, she will help others."

After her pronouncement, Jenny and I looked at each other in disbelief. We were not entirely certain what the being had in store for Robin, but it sounded like she wasn't done with us either. Jenny and I told Robin what was happening. She thought it strange, but admitted to having had some off black outs that she never experienced before. Things got really strange after that night.

I had forgotten to gas up the car. I never did that before, but it was easy to become distracted with so much craziness in my life. I ran out of gas somewhere on 1st Avenue North near 66th street. The Angelic being spoke through Robin and told us not to worry.

In less than three minutes, a tow truck pulled up along side of us. A guy with a gas can got out and put enough gas in my car to get us to a gas station. He left before I could thank him or say anything. I pulled around the corner to a gas station and gassed up the car. All three of us were freaked out.

Robin spoke with her dad over the next couple of nights. She was uncertain what was going to happen, but agreed to return to school at Boca Ciega. She had already missed almost a month of school and didn't want to place her potential graduation in further peril.

She stayed after school almost every day to try and catch up and brought lots of homework back to my house.

It was now two weeks since she came back to my door seeking asylum. I became concerned about her presence because I didn't want to be involved in any legal issues that might arise from her situation. I was certain that her mom and step dad were just biding time. She would turn eighteen in another month and I assumed they were trying to keep her out of the house until then. It would be easy to declare her a runaway just before that. Once she turned eighteen, no one would go out of their way to find her and Robin would no longer be their problem.

I took Jenny and Robin out to dinner to discuss her problems. We ate at a Big Boy restaurant. I loved their burgers and Jenny liked their deserts. The place was air conditioned and someone must have turned it way up. It was really cold in the restaurant. I watched as a boy eating dinner with his parents just in back of us pulled a space heater they had around for chilly nights over to his table.

The boy turned on the heater. It was set on HIGH and I could feel it all the way to our table. After the boy and his family finished dinner, he got up and tried pushing his chair in. The chairs had plastic backs and the boy began screaming in pain as the plastic from the chair back melted on to his hand. It was a nightmare situation and I could see the plastic was stuck to his hands and burning them as he held them up crying for help.

Robin got up, grabbed a container of ice near a condiments area and ran over to the boy. She shoved the boy's hands in it and that seemed to help, but the plastic was still stuck to his hands. Then Jenny and I watched in shock as Robin pulled his hands up out of the ice and gently wiped them with hers. The plastic came off as if had never been stuck to his hands at all.

When she was done, there were no burns or anything. The plastic fell into the ice container and some of it stuck to the container. The boy was fine and his parents were as stunned as we were. They asked Robin if she was a nurse or medically trained emergency response technician. She said nothing and walked back to our table. Seconds later, Robin asked why everyone was looking at her. She had no memory of the incident with the boy.

Once again, the Angelic being's prediction came true. Robin was helping people. Jenny and I didn't know what to make of it, but after her own experiences with the Angelic being and her belief in paranormal phenomenon, she wasn't about to question what she saw with her own eyes any more than I was.

After we finished eating, Robin told us that she was going to get a lawyer to deal with her mom, dad and step dad. She had a cousin that was well off and sympathetic to her cause, He didn't like her mom, dad or step dad and was would be more than happy to help make their lives miserable. She spoke with him over the phone the next day. He sent her some money to hire a lawyer and find a place to live.

Jenny, Mary Ann, Bob and I again became busy with the UFO Club. The membership needed to elect a new set of officers because all of us were graduating. The new officers would take over the club during the first semester the following fall. After the new officers were elected, we prepared to say goodbye to a club that had become like a second home to all of us.

Spring break came and Jenny and I helped Robin find a new place to live. She moved into a small boarding house for college students and single working people. They allowed her in after her cousin called and explained her legal and housing problems. It was a nice place and would do until she graduated high school and the

legal system got done trying to figure out and settle the situation between her and her family.

The clock was ticking and I knew that I had to start making some decisions about my life. I thought about college, but I wanted to wait until I was mentally and emotionally ready for that. Instead, I started looking into a deal that the Marines were offering. By serving four years, two active and two inactive, I could earn a pile of college money and a bunch of benefits. I would also be guaranteed technical training in a field of my choice.

A two year break from school sounded good to me and I already knew all about the military since I had been around it for most of my life. However, I decided to wait and make no decision about that or anything else until after I graduated. In the mean time, I still had lots of money left from my portion of my dad's life insurance and a number of paid speaking engagements coming up which kept me comfortably in the black.

I spent most of Spring Break with Jenny after Robin moved out of my house. We checked on Robin from time to time and hung out with Bob and Mary Ann a few times, but Jenny and I really enjoyed each other's company. I won't say that I didn't miss my conversations with Mary Ann or deny that I still had romantic feelings for her, but if push came to shove, Jenny was always the first person I thought about each day.

The more I thought about it, the more I was convinced that the person who said 'It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all' was probably an idiot. As Spring Break ended, I knew it was just a matter of time before Jenny and I went our separate ways. I could easily pretend it wouldn't happen, but I knew there was no way to avoid it. She was going off to college and I had no idea where I was going.

Time flew by and before I knew it, it was time for the Senior Prom. Our prom was held at the school and everyone dressed for the occasion. Jenny and Mary Ann looked fabulous in their dresses, while Bob and I wore suits and looked as cool as we could. We mingled with everyone and danced until late that night. For me, it was a melancholy time. I was about to say goodbye to school and people I had met and spent a lot of time with over the past several years.

Graduation Day finally arrived. Our graduation ceremonies were held at the Bayfront Center in downtown St Pete. Everyone wore their caps and gowns and dressed for the occasion. My mom came to watch me receive my diploma and I wished that my father could have been there. The colonel was there for Mary Ann, but also took the time to come and congratulate me. I said a final goodbye to everyone I knew from the senior class and collected my diploma.

Jenny and I planned a big celebration that night. Although I didn't feel much like celebrating, I didn't want to be by myself. We invited Bob, Mary Ann, Robin and other people we knew from our church and youth group. The party was going to be held at Jenny's place. She really went all out and decorated an outside area near her house for the event.

While Jenny went out with her folks that afternoon, I visited with my mom, The Colonel and Mary Ann's parents. I returned to my house feeling strangely. I had a feeling of impending doom that I couldn't shake. I knew that feeling well and it wasn't good. Every other time I had it; something really bad happened or was going to happen. The experience I had in Florida while my folks and I were on vacation and they wanted to go on the free flight to the Bahamas was a case in point. Another happened more recently.

I was living in Arizona in 2001. My wife was taking some college

courses and I was working at home on some paid writing assignments. On September 10th, I was watching Good Morning America. They had some fluff piece on about how long it took people that worked in Manhattan and lived in various suburbs to drive to work. The final scene showed a guy driving an SUV in New Jersey headed toward Manhattan. The twin towers were visible in the background and I suddenly became very depressed. I had the feeling that their report was pointless.
Later that day while my kids were in school, I went shopping at Wal-Mart with my older daughter. I was so depressed that I could barely function and my daughter became very concerned. By the time we got home, I still hadn't shaken the funk I was in. When my wife came home that evening, I told her about it and she said not to worry. She figured I caught a cold bug or something. Despite her explanation, I had a feeling of impending doom like none I had before. The next day was September 11th and I woke up to the same shocking news that others did, but I was less surprised about it than most people.

Robin needed a ride to the graduation party that night, so I picked her up from the boarding house. As we were driving to Jenny's house, she changed her demeanor and the Angelic being spoke through her. The being said that something about me losing a friend, but gaining a partner. As always, I was caught off guard by the pronouncement and had no idea what it was talking about. Robin returned and continued a conversation we were having before the being interrupted. I stopped her in mid-sentence to explain what had just happened. She was as confused as I was and had no idea what the message meant.

By the time I reached Jenny's house, most of our friends were there. Bob and Mary Ann hadn't arrived yet, but I was sure they were coming. Toby came with a new girlfriend and it was good to

see him again. We had lost touch since the New Year's Party and I was glad that we were able to reconnect.

Jenny's dad came walking out of his house and into our party area around nine o'clock. He had a somber look on his face and turned off the music. He said that he just received a call from Mary Ann's folks. Bob and Mary Ann were in a serious automobile accident. They wanted us to know about it so that we could pray for them and give blood if we were so inclined. I was eighteen and as a universal donor, I imagined that my blood might be helpful.

The party ended and all of us that knew Bob and Mary Ann headed off to Palms of Pasadena Hospital. By the time we got there, Bob was gone. His death shocked me so bad that I couldn't speak to anyone for about an hour. Mary Ann was not as seriously injured as we first suspected, but she was pretty banged up and would have to remain in the hospital overnight.

Jenny and I sat quietly holding hands. Robin sat with us and had no intention of leaving. We were allowed to sit in the old main lobby area near the kitchen since visiting hours were over. We finally left at around one in the morning after we were certain that Mary Ann was alright. I drove Robin home, than drove Jenny home. I told Jenny about the Angelic message and that really freaked her out.

We were still talking about the message when the Angelic being spoke through Jenny. She spoke comforting words to me that really helped me regain my composure. I told Jenny about it afterward and she wasn't at all surprised. By that time she was used to being a mouthpiece for the Being.

Mary Ann returned home the next day and spent the next two weeks recovering from her ordeal. We all attended Bob's funeral a couple of days after the accident. It was one of the worst

experiences of my life. I couldn't believe that I was saying a final goodbye to a friend that had just graduated high school. Even worse, the accident was caused by a kid who was celebrating his own graduation from another school by getting stinking drunk. Bob didn't use alcohol or drugs.

During the next week I felt like a fish out of water. I spent time with Jenny, Mary Ann, Robin and Toby, but didn't really know what to say or do. Robin came to my rescue with an interesting UFO case. She knew a couple of twin girls from Michigan that moved to Florida a few years ago. Cindy and Nancy lived in a condo with their dad on Treasure Island. Cindy was on the swim team at Boca Ciega, so I had heard of her.

The twins were having frightening dreams. Their dad knew that it wasn't unusual for them to feel the same feelings or occasionally finish each other's sentences, but the dreams were something else. Both girls started dreaming about flying through the air and into some kind of a weird craft. The dreams lasted a long time and included other people. Cindy and Nancy described the people they saw in detail. None looked like anyone they knew.

After hearing about some of the cases that I investigated, Robin asked me to speak with the girls and their dad. Mary Ann was still too upset over Bob's death and her own injuries to accompany me and Jenny was busy with her horses, so I picked up Robin at the boarding house and we headed to Treasure Island.

Cindy and Nancy lived in a very nice condo near the top floor of a high rise building just off a gold course. Jeff, their dad, owned several businesses in the Midwest and Florida. Their mom became ill a few years ago and passed away from a lung disease. After she died, the girls and their dad moved to Florida to make a new start.

Jeff was in his early 40s. The girls were sixteen and still in high

school. Robin met them at school and found that she had a lot in common with the twins. Although she was a year older, they were both from the same area in Michigan and loved athletics. Before she moved to Florida, Robin was involved with gymnastics.

The girls and their dad greeted us warmly when we arrived and invited us into their condo. For a condo, their place was huge and actually had a second floor. We chatted casually for a while, and then got down to business. I asked the girls about their dreams and they gave me a comprehensive description of what they could remember. I was certain there was a lot more that they didn't remember.

Jeff's reaction to their stories was interesting. He sat quietly, but looked like a man that wanted to get something off his chest. After talking to the girls awhile, I asked Jeff how he felt about their dreams and if he had any of his own. He was concerned because the girls never had dreams like these before. He said that he hadn't had any dreams like theirs, but had a sleepwalking problem from the time he was a kid.

Even after moving into the condo, Jeff sometimes woke up to find himself out in the hallway or up on the rooftop of the building. The roof was just one floor up. I wondered if he ever saw the girls up there. He said he didn't, but Cindy told me something interesting. The girls always wore slippers in the condo. Although the floors and carpeted areas were clean, their slippers were always dirty with some kind of dust on them.

I asked Jeff if I could go out on the roof and look around. He took me up there and I noticed a bunch of dust mixed with sand and dirt all over the place. It had been blown there by regular gusts of wind that came through the area. It looked like the same material on the girl's slippers. The areas by the condo entrance were all grassy or had paved walkways. No material like what was on the

roof was near any of the entrances or visible anywhere on the bottom floor.

I asked the girls if they had any unusual marks on their bodies. Jeff suggested they put on their bathing suits. Because both of his girls had always been involved in swimming or athletics, he was used to people seeing them in bathing suits and had no problem with that. After emerging from the bedroom in two piece bathing suits, they showed me some unusual marks near their shoulders, under their breasts and on their legs. I was allowed to take some photos to document everything.

The girls told me that the marks appeared and disappeared on a regular basis ever since they were little kids. Because they were always athletic, their dad just assumed they were from minor injuries they received while they were working out or competing. The condo was with filled with work out and athletic training equipment. I had another explanation.

I told Jeff and the girls about the typical alien kidnapping scenario. They had already seen me talk about the Elementary School Playground UFO Case on TV and knew a little about it. I suggested that Jeff may also be experiencing this phenomenon, but might not recall it. I referenced his sleepwalking and visits to the roof as proof. The fact that the girls were also going up to the roof for unknown reasons made alien kidnapping a distinct possibility.

Jeff took what I had to say better than I thought he would. I suggested that he consider taking the girls to be examined by a local psychologist that believed in using hypnosis to retrieve suppressed memories. I gave him the name of one that was working with a family from the Elementary School Playground UFO Case. He was very grateful and said he would call. I also gave the girls and their dad my phone number in case they ever wanted to talk about their experiences again or tell me about anything new

that was going on.

As we were going down the elevator, Robin's mood changed and the Angelic Being was back. It said that others needed my help. I tried to ask it about UFOs and Aliens, but the being ignored my questions as it had in the past and Robin was back. After we got down to the lobby, we walked around for a while to get a feel for the condo and surrounding grounds. I was looking for any saucer nests or other types of physical evidence that might be presence. I didn't find any.

While Robin and I were snooping around, a kid named Doran recognized me. We went to Farragut together and enjoyed each others company until he transferred to another school out of state. His parents were wealthy and owned one of the condos in the same building where the twins lived. I couldn't believe that we ran into each other like this after so long.

Doran invited Robin and I up to his condo. We accepted and found that he also lived near the top floor of the building. We spent some time with him and Doran commented on how he saw me on TV talking about UFOs. I told him the story of the UFO Club at Boca Ciega. We never really talked about the paranormal when I knew him at Farragut, so I had no idea whether he was interested in UFOs or not. It turned out that he was.

Without going into specifics or revealing the identities of the people I had already talked to, I mentioned the reason that Robin and I were there at the building that day. Doran was shocked. He had also been having weird dreams and found himself standing on the roof of the condo several times late at night. This was going on ever since he and his folks moved back to Florida from California.

Before I could go on, Doran asked me if I had been to see the twins from Michigan. I admitted that I had. He talked to them a few times in and around the building. Doran shocked Robin and I

by saying that he recalled seeing them in a brightly lit room with him during one of his dreams. He also saw other people of all ages there, but didn't recognize them. I explained that I couldn't go into details about the twins and asked to him to focus on his own experiences. He understood and appreciated my willingness to keep their information confidential.

Doran lived with his parents, but he was seventeen and they were almost never home. He graduated from a boy's prep school out of state and was now getting ready to attend a college in the area. He didn't really want to go there or any college at that time, but his parents held the purse strings and he had to do what they said or be cut off.

After speaking with Doran for a while, I came to the conclusion that he might have been experiencing UFO encounters and abductions from a very young age. Although he didn't have the kind of memories that Mary Ann had, he did have sleeping problems, dreams and may have actually seen a UFO. He recalled seeing a bright light just after dark in the back yard of a home the family had in the Los Angeles area when he was eight years old. The light hovered over his property for several minutes, and then flew away at a fantastic speed.

We talked to Doran for almost two hours. I gave him some information I thought would be helpful and my phone number. I invited him to call me if he thought of anything else or just wanted to hang out. During the ride back to Robin's boarding house, we marveled at finding two possible alien kidnapping cases in one condo building. Robin never had any paranormal experiences apart from being a mouthpiece for the Angelic Being, but I guess fate sent enough her way coming from a family like hers.
I was now certain that Robin was the partner that the Angelic Being predicted I would gain when it spoke to me about losing a

friend. Robin was intelligent and open minded. I enjoyed having her along that day and felt that she helped keep the conversations we had with everyone on track.

After visiting the recruiter a few times, I was almost certain that I would go ahead with my plan to enlist in the Marines and take the two years active, two inactive deal they had available at that time. I planned on going in sometime just before the fall. In the meantime, I decided it was time to settle things with Jenny.

A month and a half after we graduated high school, I went to see Jenny while her folks weren't home. We sat in her living room and I delivered the bad news. I explained that I enlisted in the Marines and would be going to boot camp in early September. Jenny was surprised and wanted to know more. I told her that I cared a great deal for her, but that my life was a mess.

Even if being in the Marines helped me to find my way, I doubted that it would be a way that would coincide with hers. I suggested that we end the romantic part of our relationship and, if possible, remain friends. Jenny was shocked and not very happy. I understood that because she was bright, beautiful and I can't imagine anyone guy in their right mind that would ever want to break up with her.

I knew she probably wouldn't understand it then, but I wasn't the right person for her. She really was near perfect and it would take a lot of searching for her to find a guy that could match up to her standards and fit into her lifestyle. All I knew was that I wasn't that guy. Just the fact that I got involved with Mary Ann while she was away for a week was ample evidence of that. I was emotionally confused and had no stability in my life.

We parted friends that day, but only barely. She was upset and let me know it. I was relieved. The pressure was off and I was ready

to move on with my life. I won't say that breaking up with Jenny was a selfless act, but it sure came close to that and left me with a lot of emotional baggage.

A few days after I broke up with Jenny, Mary Ann called me. Jenny called her to find out if we had been seeing each other. She also called Robin and every other girl I knew. She was trying to justify the breakup and I guessed that she just didn't understand or couldn't accept the reasons I gave her. Regardless of her feelings, the breakup was an honest one. I wasn't leaving her for someone else. I was leaving her to save both of us a lot of pain down the road.

Mary Ann wanted to see me. Although I thought it was a bad idea, I went over and picked her up. We went out for some ice cream and then back to my place. She wanted to start dating me, but suggested we wait a couple of weeks until the smoke cleared from my breakup with Jenny. She agreed and we left it at that.

A few days later I got a call from Doran. He wanted to see me and I invited him over. He brought a friend named Mark. I recognized Mark from Boca Ciega. We had a couple of classes together over the years and were the same age. Mark recently moved into the condo building where Doran and the twins lived. Like Doran, he lived with his folks and was waiting to start college in the fall. Doran and Mark were friends. Their parents were involved in a business together and the two had known one another for years.

Mark was having strange dreams and found himself on the roof of the condo several times late at night without explanation. His most recent experience had occurred two weeks ago. He woke up at almost four in the morning on the roof with a huge amount of pain in the area of his groin. His parents took him to the hospital. A doctor said that his testicles were swollen and he wondered if Mark had recently had any accidents that involved being hit in that

area. He hadn't.

A few days after waking up on the roof, he had a strange dream. Mark recalled floating into a bright light. He found himself naked on some kind of table. Small beings inserted something into his groin area which caused immense pain. They retracted it and his next memory was waking up on the roof. The pain went away a few hours after he woke up. The swelling went down a few days later.

I had no idea what they did to Mark, but it was obvious that what happened to him would be hard to explain using conventional explanations. I suggested that Doran and Mark come back the following night. I wanted Mary Ann to hear his story and see what she thought about it. I also invited Robin over.

Robin, Mary Ann, Doran, Mark and I discussed what happened to Mark the next night. Mary Ann didn't share her own experiences with them at that time, but made everyone aware that she had experienced something related to Aliens. I could also see that she took quite an interest in Mark. He was good looking, so I assumed some of her curiosity was romantic.

After several days of meeting with Mark and Doran, we suggested that he tell his folks what he was experiencing and gave him the number of the same psychologist that we referred the twins to. Mark told his folks and they did contact the psychologist, although they were certain his problems had nothing to do with Aliens. Mary Ann got together with Mark and I was glad. As much as I cared for and respected her, our relationship was no more a match made in heaven than the one I had with Jenny.

The condo cases were amazing, but I couldn't do anything with them at that time. Everyone involved came from important and wealthy families and that wasn't a can of worms I wanted to open.

Instead, I worked with Robin on few more cases in Florida until I went into the Marines. Believe it or not, things got even stranger after that. But I'll have to save that for another book.

- The UFO GUY

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